

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

FMF-20

Brazil: The Political Mood

Fortaleza, Ceará

Brazil

9 November 1968

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Institute of Current World Affairs  
366 Madison Avenue  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Nolte:

All Brazil is singing it---rightists, leftists and apoliticals. Its composer, Geraldo Vandré, is sought out by state governors to sing and play his guitar at official gatherings, and the chic Brazilian society, bedecked in silks and jewels, scurry for his autograph.

Time magazine in an October 25 coverage headed "Brazil: Edging Toward the Brink" featured the controversial song entitled "Not to Say That I Don't Speak of Flowers":

"There are soldiers who are armed but not loved  
"Mostly lost with their weapons in their hands  
"In the barracks they learn the old lesson  
"Of dying for the country and living for nothing.

"There is hunger on the great plantations  
"And desperation marching through the streets  
"But still they take the flower as their strongest refrain  
"And believe that flowers can overcome the cannon."

But a certain sector of the Brazilian society sings it with other words. Insulted by its reproach, the military have composed their own lyrics, set as a parody on the Vandré melody:

"The soldier is of the people---he is brother of the people  
"The soldier is the same as the people---with the same heart  
"Marching one advances---studying one grows  
"Working one sees how Brazil prospers."

The three most important institutions in Brazil are: futebol (soccer), as misses (beauty contests) and os festivais (popular music festivals). Partisanship for a team, a contestant or a song is ardent. On these issues a Brazilian quickly loses his usual bonhomie when encountering an adversary. Never do politics, economics or ideological causes solicit such interest nor spark such fervor.

A friend from Santiago visited me while I was in Rio. When a car full of Cariocans passed us with a large black and red flag projected from its window, she asked me what it represented. Not knowing but influenced by its anarchist colors and my recent experience in politicized Chile, I said, "It must be some political protest group."

A week or so later, on a Sunday, a similar flag passed when I was in a taxi. I asked the driver what it meant.

"That's the flag of the Flamengo soccer team. They're playing Botafogo today. Botafogo's my team."

In the International Song Festival in September the partisanship was less balanced. Almost the whole audience of 20,000 favored Vandr e's Pra N o Dizer Que N o Falei Das Flores; however, 15 jurists chose Sabi  of Tom Jobim and Chico Buarque. In a near riot, the Brazilians booed, hissed, threw missiles, and broke into a mighty and emotional chorus of:

"Caminhando e cantando e seguindo a can o  
"Somos todos iguais, bra os dados ou n o..."

But the die was cast before the Festival began. The military considered the song offensive and so instructed the jury that it should not honor it with the "Cock of Gold" award. As this fact became known after the Festival, the protest song's appeal to the populace soared even higher. The Government forbade the sale of the compact, recorded live at the Festival with Vandr e as vocalist. Yet, just last week, a month after the fray, I bought that very compact with the greatest of ease, the sales clerk showing no reaction whatsoever to my request. In addition, Phillips has a three-record set of LP's readily available which comprise the complete repertoire of the Festival, including, of course, the forbidden ballad.

So, a Brazilian saga takes shape. A song with a brief lyric stirs a nation to agitation as the result of the hypersensitive reaction of an unimaginative Government geared into a dour military, attempting to guide the destinies of a people whose great charm lies in their sense of humor, love of the good life, flights of fancy and whose great fault lies in their disdain of discipline, hard work and restrictions.

Unlike his Spanish-speaking neighbors, the Brazilian does not easily rise in physical protest against a political indignation--instead he vents his frustration in joke, the steamvalve of the Brazilian society. The military does not reflect the true Brazilian character and has been the brunt of innumerable witticisms since 1964:

"Why is the military mind like a loaf of bread:  
"Because it's square, has a hard crust and is all soft inside."

The barrage of jokes about Costa e Silva during his 1965 presidential "campaign" (he was the only candidate) was deafening. The best one I heard does not translate well into English, being a play on words--that is, on the name of Costa e Silva:

"Qual   a diferen a entre um trem e o Brasil?  
"Um trem vai em frente e apita.  
"O Brasil vai de costa e silva."

"What is the difference between a train and Brazil?  
"A train goes forward (em frente) and whistles (from the verb "apitar").  
"Brazil goes backwards (de costa) and whistles (from the verb "silvar").

One of the most popular plays now being performed in Rio is Dr. G t lio:

Sua Vida e Sua Gloria. Its plot is based upon the crises and conflicts of the reign of Getúlio Vargas (alternately dictator and president of Brazil between 1930 and 1954) and the embittered period leading to his suicide while still in office. It is charged with invectives against the Establishment and the United States. The theme is tragic, the presentation is festive. The whole is a carnival told by means of samba. In the finale the corpse of Vargas is wheeled off as the dirge is played by the piquant instruments of the escola da samba—the cuica, reco-reco, pandeiro, and tambourine. The actors withdraw, hips and arms swaying to the beat. It is an interpretation befitting the Brazilian character.

But this live-and-let-live way of life is increasingly vitiated by nasty spats. The military hand lies heavy on the society. Coming out of the theater in the Maison Francaise during my first week in Rio, I and my companions were startled to confront a tank rounding the corner and rumbling down the street past us, its metal treads clanking over the cobblestones. It was alone, loose in the night, apparently scurrying for the barracks. But for one who has never seen a tank except in parades and films, this metal monster aroused a first-hand realization of the psychological effect of using such "overkill" equipment to quell civilian demonstrations. To contain one such articulation of disapproval in Rio, the main avenue was lined with tanks, their heavy presence antipathic to the normal spontaneity of a Cariocan conglomeration.

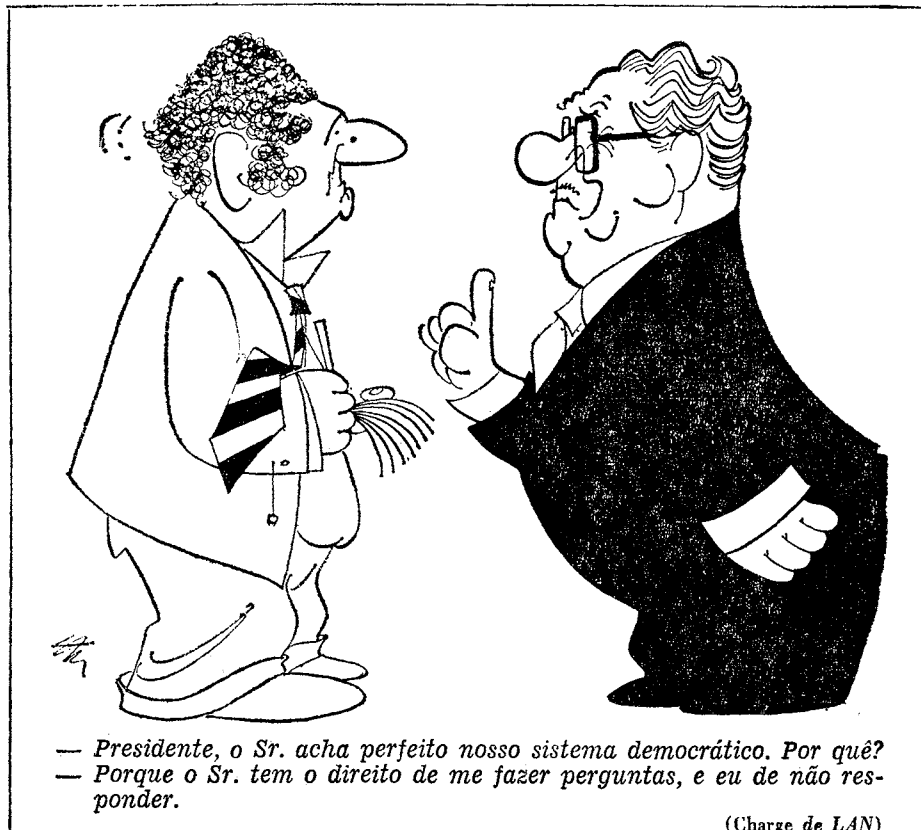
Perceiving the error of such David and Goliath confrontations, the Brazilian Government is now moving to adapt its equipment to a level more in measure to the new "enemy". The newspapers recently reported the purchase in Great Britain of some \$10 million of small arms and protective garb proper for anti-riot use. Though it will probably not be announced, another contract<sup>for</sup> a fleet of armored trucks is being negotiated, to be custom-made also at an expenditure of several million dollars; for street use in the fast-growing sophistication of mob warfare, these agile vehicles can eject water under high pressure and of varied colors so that dye-stained skins will later inform the police who took part in the outbreak and, according to color, the rioters' whereabouts at the time of the encounter. One wonders if computers will be brought into play to determine the relationship of red rioters on the corner of Av. Rio Branco and Rua Ouvidor and pink rioters at Av. Presidente Wilson and Rua México. Should the situation demand, tear gas will substitute the Kool-Aid treatment.

In 1964 President João Goulart was overthrown by the military with the enthusiastic support of large segments of the Brazilian society. The word "Revolution" was adopted for the coup d'etat as the country in an ebullient mood heralded an end to inflation, a return of political stability and a strengthening of the democratic system. The optimists have instead seen their dreams sullied by administrative restringencies and inaptitudes; those whose support was first avid are now passive, those who first differed with the new regime now boycott it, those who have come of age in these four years now combat it. Only the top men of the executive branch persist in using the word "Revolution" as though it had really taken place, legislators question what happened to it, and journalists jab at the vacuity of its significance.

A non-lover of authoritarian governments, the intellectual Tristão de Athayde inveighed against the situation in his newspaper column in August 1966:

"The first threatening declarations of the future President of the Republic (Costa e Silva)—now nominated although not yet approved by the Congress, the latter however only a secondary formality in the splendid regime in which we live—only were a deception for those who still held some illusion about the 'revolutionary' processes. Any revolution means the substitution of the law by the arbitrary. It is the imposition of the violent will, of a long-prepared program or of an inherent historical process. Our barracks revolt of March 1964 does not fall within any of these three classic patterns. It was not the fruit of any dominant personality. It did not have a previously prepared program. It represents exactly the opposite of an inherent historical process since it was an artifice imposed on the nation by the minority and not the result of a natural course as impelled by the majority...one could say that it was a half-revolution in that it replaced what was mediocre of the Left by what was mediocre of the Right.

"The reintegration (of the people within their natural evolutionary process) might have been achieved in the first month of the regime if a Constitutional Assembly had been immediately convoked, elected by



"President, you believe that our democratic system is perfect. Why?"  
 "Because you have the right to ask me questions, and I have the right of not responding."

the people, instead of that which occurred immediately---the schism between the Revolution and the people, particularly the alienation of two forces which give consistency to every revolutionary movement of an industrialized or industrializing country such as ours: the young people and the urban workers...But what happened on April 9 (the 1st Institutional Act) was exactly the opposite: the obsession with the past, with punishment, with expurgation, and the concentration of power in the hands of the military elite, well-intentioned and educated, but without a defined program and with a cult of unpopularity...the principal problem is the growing gap between the real country and the official country, between the Brazilian people (both elites and masses) and the juridico-political structure."

Two years after Tristão de Athayde wrote this prophetic diagnosis it is exactly this schism between the people and the Government which has fulminated in vitriol, violence, terrorism and death---unnatural to the Brazilian society. At this time, rumors proliferate of an impending coup, moving the Government to the Right; word has it that only the visit of the Queen of England during the first week of November has forestalled the move.

When a Senator was asked late in October if he considered the national political situation grave, he responded:

"Look, it's like this---you've heard of the monkeys along the Grajaú River which is invested with piranhas. The monkeys drink the river water by using papaya husks so that the piranhas won't eat their lips---I'm just like they are, carrying my papaya husk underneath my arm."

The current crisis atmosphere counters an underlying apathy, poisoning the political situation in a precarious state of indecision and immobilism. Not all the parts of the political mechanism are operating and others only part-time so that those forces which do act exert an aberrant effect.

An ailment underlying most Latin American societies is the relative indifference of the middle class to the social and political development of all sectors. Though numerically of considerable importance, particularly in an area such as southern Brazil, this middle stratum has been judged lacking in the community spirit and liberal ideology which would motivate it to foster a vigorous government of truly democratic content. One of the many analyses of this sector, in Elites in Latin America (Lipset and Solari), concludes:

"...Compared with the period of accession to political and economic power, during the stage of compromise with the established order the middle-class policies simply preserved the established positions and recognized poverty as a 'fact' of the social system. The impulse toward a better distribution of power, prestige and wealth steadily declined in importance, and the middle sectors showed more interest in securing for themselves the advantages of the desired status, in a social organization where the presence of poverty heightened the privileges of the groups in power. Inasmuch as the social mechanism promoted the unequal distribution of duties and rewards, to the advantage

of the new middle classes, the latter presumably identified readily with the established order."

Though Brazil has the trappings of a political democracy, the reality is otherwise. One salient example, symptomatic of underlying economic and social disparities, is that about half of the Brazilians cannot read and write in a country where illiterates may not vote. Rural holdings of 1000 to 100,000 hectares occupy 81.3% of the national territory, in the hands of 12.6% of the landholders. Latifundistas continue to hold a dominant position in the legislative and executive branches. The labor movement dawdles under the tutelage of the Government. Only .07% of the young people manage to complete a university education. Etc.

I flew into São Paulo directly from Santiago, Chile, in mid-July. The latter is a city where politics is topic of every conversation, and the interest of the general public in the activities of its government is high. Coming into Brazil after an absence of several months, I was eager to catch up with events and ideas. I have many Brazilian friends in São Paulo, mostly middle class, and I soon found that I was practically the only one interested in talking politics. I couldn't even get most of them to consider that there was anything wrong with the way things were going. I concluded that the root of this indifference was the renewed prosperity of the city. It had previously suffered a recession, but the Government liberalized credit and now profits are accruing once more. In São Paulo profit is palliative for the political grievances of the adult Paulista.

When I arrived in Rio in late August, spring was beginning. The sun was bright and hot, and the beaches many and inviting. Rio is a city that likes to live up to its epicurean reputation. There's a chic new restaurant in Copacabana where the food is superb and expensive—the place to be seen. There are lots of places "to be seen"—restaurants and cocktail lounges and boites (night clubs). An ad for saccharin asked a key question on the mind of the Cariocan woman: "Are you ready to use your bikini this coming summer?" There was lots of new slang, Rio's most abundant product, and everyone wanted to know who was na berlinda—in the spotlight. A leading daily commented on "This Best of All Possible Worlds":

"Everyone went to the beach, President Costa e Silva is encouraged by the new perspectives that are opening (even if they were closing, he would continue encouraged), Antonio's continues full of people from all sorts of places and backgrounds (but all with the same tanned complexions and festive expressions), in the theater some protest, others pacify, others swagger, and life rolls on without anyone worrying about it... some say that we are now in an abyss but since in this abyss they still serve caviar canapes at Buchanan's, nobody complains."

In the favelas, the slum dwellers are training their escolas da samba and designing their fantasias (extravagant and costly costumes); the Government has declared that Carnaval will last 15 days in 1969—that should do to divert and exhaust the Cariocans for the whole year.

One thing is for sure. There will never be a revolution in Rio on the week-end---everyone will be at the beach.

Some politicians do arouse enthusiasm in the people. One Cariocan social column ran a regular feature of women's opinions of who was the most charming Brazilian man. Among the four or five mentioned each day only one reappeared consistently---Juscelino Kubitschek, whose political rights were annulled for ten years by the "Revolution" and who lives abroad. All the charges of graft, corruption and mismanagement fired at the former president cannot dispel the popular appeal of this smiling extrovert. He has charisma. Since 1964, that's what neither the two presidents nor their ministers have had. Both chief executives, being military men, have had little appreciation of the press and little talent in handling it. Castelo Branco admitted to this fault and in his candor and bluntness won respect of some journalists; in a typical contrast of the styles of Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva, the latter shuns press contact---consistent to his impersonal and distant exercise of authority. Both administrations have taken drastic political and economic measures affecting the purses and basic rights of the populace without bothering to explain their acts. Since 1964, a lack of charisma and sense of public relations have estranged the popular support; those who first cheered the "Revolution" are now passive.

Those who first differed with the "revolutionary" regime now boycott it. During the Goulart years (1961-1964), the Government bumbled, stumbled over opposition obstacles, philandered with the international Left. Demagoguery exalted the masses---o povo. But lower echelons of volunteers gave feverishly of their time and energy, infatuated with the hope of bootstrapping Brazil into a nation of the people, for the people and by the people. Concientizar synthesized the tenor of the times---to make the common man aware of himself as an individual with rights, of his just due from the society in return for his contribution, and of his possibilities to exact that just due. The work of the idealists was, of course, exploited by the opportunists, but the myth prevailed and so did the fervor---until April 1964 when the "Revolution" squelched the literacy, hygiene and leadership classes in slum and countryside. The students, the young couples, the housewives, the social workers, all the diverse elements who had participated in the movement of concientização lost the how and the wherefore of their cause. Some suffered punitive action and most at least fretted under its threat.

Soured by the "revolutionary" government, most of these former activists are now laggards. Even though this Government might cast a program true to the basic concepts of concientização---which it has not---these disenchanted would not lift a finger to assist it. Theirs is a sit-down strike---they deliberately will do nothing to help this Government in any way.

The people's most responsive representation in a democracy is the legislative branch: it should reflect the wishes of the constituents and respond to their demands and pressures. In some parts of Brazil, Deputies and Senators have some respect for the correlation between themselves and the voters. In many other parts, legislators represent

only their own interests, having commandeered the votes of the peasants on their fazendas and purchased blocs of other votes from wholesalers called cabos eleitorais.

While visiting a small town in Pernambuco in October, I had a chance to chat casually with a local Brazilian about the November municipal elections, one of the few ballotings in which Brazilians may still participate directly. I learned that the town, Cabo, had five candidates for mayor—two from one party (MDB), three from the other (ARENA)—a mockery of the two-party aberration imposed upon the country by the 2nd Institutional Act and Complementary Act of October–November 1965.

I asked if selling votes was very common.

"Oh, yes, everybody does it. But here in town it is much better than on the plantations. There a man must do what his patrão (boss) tells him to do—his vote goes for free. Here at least he earns a little money for it. That's progress."

Pretending I did not understand the system of the cabo eleitoral, I asked him if it existed in the town and how it worked. The young man laughed and said:

"That's our voting system here. In fact, sometimes we joke that that's why the town is called 'Cabo'. It means that one man, o cabo, has control of a bunch of votes—maybe it's just four or five friends that he influences to vote a certain way. Maybe it's a storekeeper who has his employees' votes. So he negotiates with the candidates and whoever pays the most gets the votes. It doesn't really matter because the people don't believe in the candidates, nor in the elections."

Brazilians hold little respect for their National Congress. They are cynical about the low attendance and high travel records (subsidized fares) of its members. They note that the legislators are among the first to get tax exemptions and salary raises: a sinecure for a privileged class. In 1937 Getúlio Vargas closed it down, raising little public protest—nine years later it reopened. Goulart planned to disband it toward the last of his three-year satrapy, but he never got the chance. Castelo Branco summarily shut its doors in 1966, with hardly a whimper from the public.

Cynically it can be said that the main purpose of the Congress is to serve the Brazilian Government in projecting its image internationally as a democracy. There is no doubt that Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva have been "democrats" in that they have wanted to maintain the three-power structure, a Constitution of democratic verbiage, and at least the pretense of reflecting the people's will. But they have also concentrated ample power in their hands to be sure none of these three situations threatened their own authority. They both should be accredited, however, with preserving at least a precious modicum of democracy: they have had to buck the "hard line" who would do away with such frivolities and know the people would let them do so.



# CLAUDIUS



— Somos apenas radicais: para acabar a subversão, é preciso primeiro acabar com a Universidade.

ABOVE "We're only radicals: in order to do away with subversion, we must first do away with the University."

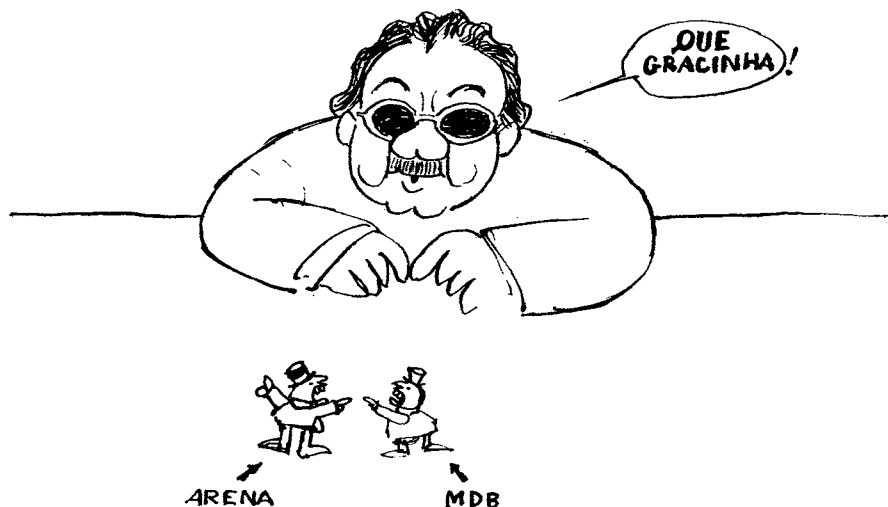
As the crisis of the last months has mounted, some of the congressional leaders have realized the quicksands underlying the existence of the national legislature. Its survival depends not upon the will of the people but upon the favor of the Government—a Government beleaguered by internal conflicts. As the frustration of certain segments of the society is increasingly vented in extra-legal demonstrations, Rightist charges of subversion crescendo, and the "hard line" of the military intones its "solutions": close the Congress, imprison all agitators, shut all university faculties fostering student rebellion, exile trouble-making priests and bishops, declare a state of siege, decree a 3rd Institutional Act, end all elections, etc. Pressure point of the antagonisms, Costa e Silva lives what he himself has described as "the bitterest days of my life". Congress plays its role with caution, its independence hobbled by the Institutional Acts and the 1967 Constitution and enervated by its fear of offending the "hard line". The cautious leadership of the two Houses wants no fillip which might shatter the delicate balance between the "democrats" and the "gorillas"; a step to the Right and Brazil would once again revert to a pure dictatorship instead of its present demodura (a "Brazilianism" combining democracia and ditadura).

Commenting on this Damocles sword, the leader of the opposition party, Mário Covas, said:

"After all, aren't we accustomed to hear with every episode all the same rumors about an impending state of seige, Institutional Acts, and do we not see the same threatening maneuvers such as the recent (secret) meeting of the High Military Command?"

The bi-party system imposed by the 2nd Institutional Act has not taken root. ARENA is supposed to represent the Government, MDB the opposition. The energies of the two have been largely spent in recriminations: the MDB accuses ARENA of being subservient to militarism, ARENA blasts MDB for leftism and incompetence. Neither the legislators nor the voters think of themselves as "Arenistas" or "Emedebistas". Loyalties still lie with the traditional parties---UDN, PSD, PTB, etc. The main idea of the decreed two-party system was to do away with the proliferation of political agglomerations but, whereas the former 13 parties often got together and agreed upon two, three or four candidates, the two artificial parties sometimes splinter their support among five or six candidates, as illustrated by the Cabo situation described above.

There is a realization in both executive and legislative branches that a more flexible and authentic party system must be allowed. When Congress convened in extraordinary session in January 1968, the Jornal do Brasil wrote: "The parliamentarians agree that the political year which is now beginning will be significant principally for its efforts to break the bonds of the bi-party restrictions." As the year now approaches the end, there has been no progress in this direction, and Brazilians' interest in the coming municipal elections is nil.



"Charge" de APPE

President Costa e Silva: "How cute."



ABOVE. Cassações: Annulment of political rights.

"revolutionary" government has also been constricted by the authoritarian power of the President to deny political rights to any citizen for a ten-year period—a power which has been exercised in innumerable cases.

What the Governments of the "Revolution" have created is a formal "democratic" system imposed from above and devoid of democratic substance. Mass participation in the country's politics has been squelched. This has not been done in one fell swoop which might have galvanized the populace to defend its rights. Rather liberties have been abraded in bits, pieces and chunks so that—in a country such as Brazil, where power centers are several and the population is dispersed—there was no one clearcut act that could weld civilian resistance. There is a distinctive "Brazilianess" in the way the political situation arrived at its present malaise, and also in the way the people have accepted each imposition with increasing apathy.

With disfranchisement, an imposed president, an artificial party system, a feckless Congress and an unorganized populace, the masses are inarticulate and the Executive all powerful. The Government lauds the idea of "diálogo", but it has closed itself inside a soundproof room.

Not only do they not have meaningful political parties nor a representative Congress, Brazilians practically do not have the vote. The last election of any significance in which the direct vote was exercised was October 1965 for 11 state governments. Holding out against the "hard line", Castelo Branco insisted that the citizens make their own choice; it nearly brought his downfall. Governors elected in two key states, Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro) and Minas Gerais, were in opposition to the "Revolution"; the nation leaned far out over the brink of another coup d'etat which would have closed state and national legislatures and annulled the elections. Castelo Branco compromised in order to halt the more radical move, decreeing the 2nd Institutional Act which gave the Executive far-reaching control, ended the multiparty system, and severely restrained individual rights. The possibility of expressing one's views of the

At least, two rebel elements in the society have become increasingly vociferous: the Church and the students. Progressive priests call for structural reforms to benefit the large pariah class—to offer them the privileges of education, health, land and employment. The root of the student discontent is the university system—archaic, unimaginative, inadequate on all scores. From these prime concerns both groups have broadened their demands to include sweeping reforms in the whole Brazilian system.

The Government's reaction has been either to ignore their cries or to set up work groups to study the situation. Work groups and investigating committees are an epidemic in Brazil now. Everytime there is a crisis a committee is set up to study it, but no action is taken to solve the cause. Agrarian reform, university reform, administrative reform are all being debated by work groups.

A work group to study agrarian reform operated under Castelo Branco; its findings and recommendations were thorough. Another work group to study the same matter has been set up by Costa e Silva; in turn, it has called for each state to establish its own work group and then submit its findings to the national body. Not all the governors have bothered to do so. Against his better judgment, a friend of mine accepted the presidency of the Pernambuco commission; in his acceptance speech he said bluntly:

"I fear that the suggestions which this group will make, even though transformed into law, will not be applied—just as has happened with the Statute of the Rural Worker and the Land Statute, never executed until this day in spite of the existence of the two institutions charged with solving the agrarian problem..."

Planejamento, planning, is a phobia. When a government official showed me a detailed schema for an agricultural diversification program, I intended to compliment him by telling him it was well-planned:

"Bem planejado," I said.

His good-humored repartee was, "Ah, I see you know all of our witticisms."

For a time the work-group stall salved the impatience, but now the call is for "solution or subversion". A series of events and contretemps have exacerbated the situation in the last months.

Even when I was still in Chile, I read in the Santiago newspapers in April that "La Situación en Brasil Anuncia Estado de Sitio"—The Brazilian Situation Threatens a State of Siege. A student had been killed by the police in a street clash in Rio. Since then there have been so many student-police confrontations and so many deaths that the count is lost.

In June 10,000 students, teachers, artists, priests, nuns and parents walked in an orderly protest down Rio's main avenue, chanting "Down with the dictatorship" and "Power for the people". From the

tall buildings on each side they were showered with confetti of approval. By government order, the demonstration was permitted, and the police kept their distance during the four-hour articulation of political discontent.

Government restraint has since disintegrated, and the encounters have become ugly. A law forbids such demonstrations and, at the slightest hint of the possibility of a public protest, police are mobilized in such massive numbers that only lightning strikes at one point can have any effect; any grouping of civilians is suspect and immediately dispersed. Av. Rio Branco in Rio de Janeiro is continually asworn with blue-helmeted police, clustered in half dozens on all four corners of the main inter-sections. Bored, they chat among themselves, fingering their over-sized night sticks which with Brazilian humor have been dubbed "family-size".

In Recife the main street, Av. Guararapes, has a series of small concrete islands down the center of its wide brick expanse. Through several blocks of the center of the city, police are often strung from island to island, stationed at attention, a double line back to back facing out in both directions over the traffic and the crowded sidewalks beyond. Here In Fortaleza last week rumors of student agitation brought out the police in force, closed down the schools and the two U.S. government agencies and caused cautious residents to stay within the sanctuary of their homes; the demonstration did not come off.

In fact, there is some indication that the technique of the street demonstration is being abandoned as it has only hardened the Government's resistance, alienated passive elements, caused senseless deaths, and achieved no real results. So another means of political expression is squelched in what has been a long succession of government actions to deny the society any means of aggregating and articulating its political views. First the legal outlets were screwed shut, causing resort to extra-legal and extra-system expressions---street demonstrations and protest songs and plays. Now these are being quelled and censored.

From the beginning the Government has suspected "international influences" among those opposing it. Moving in to arrest over 700 students last month when they tried to hold an illegal national congress, the police allegedly found materials of Cuban origin. With each repressive move the Government is pushing its opposition further and further underground and into the hands of radicals. That Communist elements should operate to take advantage of the discontent is common sense; if so, the Government is abetting them by closing off all other alternatives.

As the crisis mounts and neither Right nor Left are satisfied with the Government's solutions, each resorts increasingly to methods of terrorism. Always well-dressed and groomed, the terrorist groups of the Right---the CCC (Command for Hunting Communists, MAC (Anti-Communist Movement), etc.---machine gun the buildings of university schools frequented by leftist students. Such a group is probably responsible for last month's machine gunning of the home of Dom Helder Câmara, Archbishop of Recife and Olinda. In July a company

of the CCC rose in mass from a São Paulo audience watching the play Roda Viva; they swept over the stage, beating the actors and stripping the ~~in~~ leading actress. The play, by the leading Brazilian composer Chico de Buarque, used unkind words about conservatives of the Church, the Government and U.S. businesses. After a run of several months, the government censors decided to ban it in October.

On the Left a radical splinter group of the outlawed Communist Party also has terrorism as one of its main tenets. It is possible that such an organization was responsible for the cold-blooded assassination in October of a young American captain studying in São Paulo. Throughout this year there has been a crescendo of bomb detonations and misfires, aimed largely at U.S.-oriented institutions. Here in Fortaleza last month a ten-stick bomb in a black leather purse was discovered on the steps of the Brazilian-United States Institute, its fuse burned out before it reached the explosives—powerful enough to destroy the IBEU itself as well as adjacent buildings, including a children's hospital, and a few vehicles and passengers across the street at one of the city's busiest bus stops. The police have no lead as to who was responsible, and they probably will not.

In my interpretation what has taken place since 1964 has been a progressive denial of normal political expression due to the obsession of the Castelo Branco and Costa e Silva Governments to rid the country of "subversive elements" and to restructure it in a neat Western-world formal democracy inappropriate to the Brazilian scene. The people, with their lackadaisical tendencies and their involvement in their own affairs, have allowed this to take place. But small activist elements, left only with extra-legal or illegal means of protest, have resorted to violence and terrorism, shaking the society by their methods so alien to the Brazilian character. Like a human being plagued by insecurity, the Government cannot bear criticism. Certain "ungrateful" acts—such as Vandrê's flower song and a speech by Federal Deputy Moreira Alves calling upon the people to boycott the military parades on Brazil's independence day—have offended the Armed Forces and enlarged the schism between the military and the people. The Government, through lack of resolve and action, has gained the sobriquet of "immobilismo"—immobility—and has frittered away whatever civilian support it had. Its power base has, therefore, been reduced to the military and some civilian elements which, defensively, feel it is better to stick with what they have than take a chance on what might come.

If the challenge of such groups as the students, Church and dissident Congressmen should continue or increase—or if such groups should forge a coalition or gain the support of other sectors such as the urban workers (neither possibility seems great)—or, in essence, if any strengthening on the Left gave further alarm to the "hard line" of the Right—then, a coup d'état moving the Government to the Right could take place. Rumors hint that this may come about this month, but then the whole year has been rife with such prognostications. In the last week or so, the country has been calm, and it may be that the opposition realizes it is only pushing the Government further to the Right by its provocations.

There is no expectation that the move could be to the Left. Its leadership has been decapitated and its forces are dispersed. Furthermore, responsible leaders of the Left veto such a possibility as they foresee that it would just bring upon them the awesome wrath of the military who with their massive firepower would abort such a move by massacre.

Parenthetical to this Brazilian situation, one hardly need know any of the facts of a Latin American coup d'etat these days---one can easily guess that the professed cause is the "incompetency of the civilian president" and that the reality is a shifting of the Government to the Right. Only if there is military opposition and, therefore, bloodshed is it an attempt to move to the Left.

Stasis afflicts Brazil at this time. In the Government's anxiety to maintain and formalize the system and in its preoccupation with the national security, it fears and denies the dynamic forces which foster the total development of the society. It attempts to occlude the process of mobilization, substituting a paternalistic decision-making process in which a clique within the Executive bestows its directives upon the society, *deus ex machina*. That the 1967 Constitution might emanate from an elected Assembly or even from the Congress was not considered; it was forged from the memos of ministers and military men. If a crisis arises, the President turns to the Military High Command or the National Security Council rather than the Congressional leadership.

The political system has been dismantled. The underlying Brazilian political culture is lacking in orientation toward the institution which governs it---there is no comprehension of its technological goals, no effective relationship to a distant and impersonal executive, no positive response to an instrument which resorts to force rather than parley.

In the long view, those who feel that Brazil's development will depend upon basic reforms suggest three alternatives and analyse them as follows:

1) Evolution. Favored by the present regime, this process would be gradual and operate within the established system with stress upon economic development. Under the close tutelage of the Government, a technological and institutionalized progress would proceed in measured advances, little by little encompassing the marginal areas and population. Subjacent to this mechanized development would be the social and political acculturation of the society which should be closely controlled and paced so that demands emanating from these processes of integration do not disturb the stability essential for economic advancement.

Contradicting this solution, many argue that dynamic forces now at large in Brazil and the world---urbanization, mass communication, secularization, competing ideologies, etc.---defy such a gradualist approach. In addition, in that it is predicated on a traditional system little evolved from its semi-feudal formation, it will only contribute to the continuing imbalance of the social, economic and

political conditions---wealth, power and prestige drawn to the rich as the poor get poorer---to the South as the Northeast gets poorer, etc. The dichotomy in the society will lead to a stagnation of the economy due to a lack of expansion in internal or external markets and a paucity of qualified personnel for executing such a program.

2) Internal structural reforms. Determined measures to force a redistribution in the national income and the incorporation of the marginal majority of the population should be taken by the national government. Such action would represent the majority and open up the society to a dynamic development, maximizing its human and material wealth.

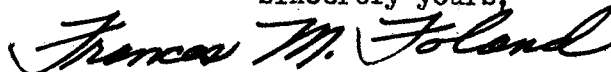
Those who favor this program admit that it could likely lead to revolution. The Brazilian traditional elites continue to dominate the system and in their intransigence will not concede to easing the political processes so that such reforms could be brought about through legal means.

3) An international crisis. A conjuncture of international events, beyond Brazil's control---such as a major war or a serious depression---could alter the country's internal conditions so as to effect major economic and social transformations. The power structure could be reshaped, as it was by the 1930 Depression closing the era of coffee-baron hegemony and leading to the rise of the middle class and a populist regime---or forcing the country to shift its economic emphasis, just as World War II boosted industrialization within Brazil. It is also suggested that any major catastrophe would envelop both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. and change the balance and the attitudes of these dominant powers in such a way as to alter the internal forces of Brazil, so closely geared to these two giants.

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As epilogue, I should like to comment on the nature of this newsletter. It was not written as a consummate study aimed at documenting each critical episode which has contributed to today's political mood---for instance, the invasion by the military police of the campus of the University of Brasilia, by chance, is not mentioned though it is one of the primary sorepoints. Rather, this vignette of the political mood has been sketched in broad strokes---therefore is necessarily simplified and admittedly one-sided reflecting my own interpretation and intuition which, I hope, is true to the Brazilian reality but which does emphasize one view to the detriment of others, both more conservative and more radical.

Sincerely yours,



Frances M. Foland

Cartoons: p.4, p.9 Jornal do Brasil; p. 10, O Gruzheiro;  
p. 11, Folha de São Paulo.