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BRAZIL

Brazilian students have a long tradition of protest. Their grievances are legitimate, and pose a long-range threat to the maintenance of stability.

A cycle of student provocation and police repression tends to feed off itself. Recurring demonstrations are likely to continue at least until the government makes some moves to implement badly needed educational reforms. Until then, politically conscious students remain easy prey for any agitator.

Concurrently, pressure for firmer action to halt agitation builds up in the military--which is the key to the stability of the Costa e Silva government. The President's reluctance to act under pressure has virtually precluded his doing anything to satisfy either the students or the military. His continued inaction is likely to increase, rather than alleviate, the problem.

Government Attitudes and Actions

Until the April 1964 revolution that ousted leftist President Joao Goulart, the dominant student organization was the National Students' Union (UNE) and its state level affiliates. The UNE was supported by the government and controlled by a united front of Communists and members of the radical student group, Popular Action (AP).

The revolution weakened but did not completely destroy the effectiveness of these groups. In late 1964 the Castello Branco government realized that the tradition of left-wing student organizations would not die easily, and that there would be little control over student activities in the absence of administration action. In November 1964 Congress passed the so-called Suplicy Law, establishing a new student representation system, headed by a National Students' Directorate. Disenchantment with this statute--which set controls on student activities as a requirement for continued financial support--undercut its effectiveness.

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In early 1967, the government amended the Suplicy Law and abolished student organizations at national and state levels, permitting only groups within individual universities and faculties. The 1967 law also banned student strikes and political activity, and further declared illegal all secondary school organizations--except athletic, civic, cultural, and social groups. It has been no more successful than the earlier version, and in effect has created a vacuum in which left-wing and radical groups have thrived in the absence of recognized student organizations.

The government has moved only desultorily to fill this void. One student group, Decision, has received government backing, but as yet it has failed to produce anything approaching a national organization. A government-sponsored civic action program, Project Rondon, designed to involve students in helping the poor, especially in rural areas, has yet to have any major impact either.

Neither the Costa e Silva nor the Castello Branco administration has been able--or willing--to establish rapport with the students. Both have viewed student political activity as subversive, and treated it as a police problem. This hard-nosed and indifferent attitude merely has facilitated a trend toward the Left in student politics.

The Education Ministry is a morass of bureaucratic inefficiency, and Minister Tarso Dutra, a crony of the President's, is widely regarded as the least effective member of the cabinet. Despite heavy pressure, Costa e Silva has refused to replace him. The President's Special Commission on Higher Education--chaired by General Meira Mattos, a widely respected military man much distrusted by students--recently pointed to numerous faults in the educational system and recommended that the "whole structure undergo a complete reform." The government, however, continues to "study" the problem.

"The System"

The government--while admitting that some student grievances are legitimate--has maintained

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that it cannot undo overnight inequities created through decades. In point of fact, however, although the funds allotted to education since 1964 have increased, the educational system's share of the national budget has decreased during the same period from more than 11 percent to little better than 7 percent.

Secondary education depends largely on private schools which have been a bottleneck for the education of children from lower income families. Higher education brings together part-time students and professors in part-time, overcrowded universities with outmoded curricula and ill-qualified instructors who are so poorly paid that they must hold more than one job. The catedratico system, whereby professors hold life-tenure in university chairs, results in a powerful force opposed to reform. Further, university facilities are usually widely scattered.

Students take courses only within their own faculty. Many study law, preparatory to careers in politics or business, rather than the more demanding technical courses required for the understaffed fields of engineering, agriculture, or medicine. There is little emphasis placed on regular class attendance; students often remain for years without graduating, thus creating a professional student class that is particularly inclined toward politics and agitation.

The Role of the Students

Brazilian students traditionally have exerted an influence out of proportion to their numbers. This derives in large part from the prestige which Brazilian society accords to intellectual attainment and from the elite nature of the educational system. Participation in university politics long has been a first step toward a successful political career.

Although the majority of Brazilian students are apathetic and apolitical--only 10 to 20 percent ever participate in student politics--they share many

attitudes in common with the activists. One of these is an inordinate faith in Brazil's destiny and a deep disappointment over present day reality--poverty and illiteracy, undeveloped natural resources, and lack of opportunity. Few, however, are prepared to do more than protest.

Students generally place part of the blame for Brazil's difficulties on widespread corruption and on inefficient and mismanaged government institutions. Some few may blame the inflexibility of Brazilian society, while others accuse Communists and other radicals of vitiating development. For the majority, however, the most obvious scapegoat is foreign imperialism, which they believe siphons off the country's wealth and conspires to prevent Brazil's accession as a "Great Power."

Clearly the US is the most visible foreign power on the Brazilian scene, and as such the target of student, as well as popular, wrath. Even "democratic" Brazilian students state confidently that the US government is dominated by economic groups that control international politics and prevent the development of the "third world"; that the US initiated the planting of coffee in Africa in order to maintain Brazil in a colonial status; that US involvement in Vietnam is aggression and doomed to fail.

Student Organizations and Leaders

There are no effective national student organizations except those which operate clandestinely. The legal central student directorates and faculty-level academic directorates most often are controlled by leftists, many of whom simultaneously hold office in the clandestine organization and are members of a radical political movement.

A bewildering variety of splinter organizations come to prominence and then fade out, depending primarily on the ability of their key leaders. Students--like the majority of Brazilians--tend to support charismatic leaders, rather than ideas, which accounts in part for the disparities in student

organizations from state to state and even from city to city. For example, leaders and organizations prominent in Rio de Janeiro may well be almost unknown in Curitiba or Recife.

The illegal UNE remains the dominant organization and probably commands at least the tacit support of most students. However, UNE recently has suffered from disagreement among key leaders over tactics and policy. The struggle at the national level appears to be between the militant Popular Action (AP) group, headed by Luis Travassos, which won control of UNE at its last national congress and a less radical group headed by Edson Soares and composed, at least in part, of people sympathetic to Communism. The basic difference between the two groups appears more a matter of degree than substance. AP militants are pushing to broaden protests to include national and international issues as well as legitimate educational complaints. Further, they want to reject outright any government offers to talk things over. The more moderate line prefers to restrict agitation to student problems and wants to accept the government's challenge--but only to "unmask" the administration's duplicity and the fact that it does not really intend to enact reforms. The Thirtieth UNE Congress, scheduled to be held clandestinely in the near future, may end in the establishment of two rival organizations. It is also possible that one side or the other will bow to whichever group has the greatest student following. At the present it appears that the AP radicals will give way.

This same split between radicals and extreme radicals exists in at least some of UNE's subordinate state organizations. The Sao Paulo group has been split for months. There are two presidents and two separate state organizations that manage to cooperate on certain issues, but waste much time and energy fighting each other instead of the government.

In addition to the legal and illegal student organizations, there are also political movements or parties which have student wings. In the case of the AP, students make up the great majority of

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the total membership, and they also constitute substantial parts of two smaller groups, the Revolutionary Organization of Marxist Political Workers (POLOP) and the Revolutionary Workers' Party/Trotskyite (PORT).

The AP is one of the most radical and certainly the most controversial of the student-oriented political groups. It was created in the early 1960's when some activists in the Catholic University Youth and the Catholic Student Youth groups broke away to participate in political and social reform movements. Young Catholic activists had been gradually moving further left since the mid-1950's, and their views consistently came into conflict with the conservative-moderate views of the church hierarchy. Although the AP's views were originally fairly typical of Catholic action groups, its clandestinity and cell-type organization led to a growing radicalization.

From its formation until the 1964 revolution, the AP controlled the UNE through a united front coalition with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and grew rapidly. Despite government efforts to destroy it, the AP has retained its hold on UNE, and until the recent schism appeared to be thriving. Now there is evidence to suggest, that the AP may be beginning to disintegrate in some states. Dissension and defections have occurred in Minas Gerais and Sao Paulo, and in Guanabara the AP has been virtually moribund since the police swooped up most of its state leaders in 1967.

Not a great deal is known about the AP. It is headed by a national command of four conscientiously obscure figures. There are ten regional commands, some of which are divided into zones. Internally, the AP is organized into cells of three to five members, base nuclei of three to five cells, and base assemblies made up of all nuclei members. This pyramidal arrangement continues through sections and section assemblies to the zone level. Certainly such sophistication has not developed in many states.

AP may number as many as 2,000. Finances are murky; at least some funds come from within the

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Church--particularly from the Dominican Order which has long had a special relationship with the AP. Other funds also come from Christian Democrats abroad, especially in Western Europe. Probably the majority of the money comes from the AP's own members and sympathizers.

Even if the AP's influence is waning, student militancy is growing. Marxism in its many shades and hues traditionally has appealed to Brazilian intellectuals. Many educators and students are influenced by its tenets and are easily led into supporting Communist causes. It is not likely that many students actually join the party, but many are willing to follow the Communist ideological lead and will end by giving at least tacit support to one or another of the Communist factions.

The PCB has long made a special effort to attract students. Despite the recent splits which have racked the party, it has continued these efforts and reportedly its leaders are much encouraged by their success in attracting new members as a result of student demonstrations. The Party has reactivated the Communist Youth Union that was abolished in 1958, not only to attract younger members but also to forestall the creation of dissatisfied young militants who until now have been taken directly into the party without any apprenticeship.

Working through regular student organizations, the Communists though few in numbers have been able to dominate policy through parliamentary maneuver, militancy and superior organizations, and because most Brazilian students are inclined toward Marxism and disillusioned with democracy as they see it practiced.

The PCB sends students to the Soviet Union and to Eastern European countries for academic and political training. There are probably about 200 Brazilian students studying in the bloc--perhaps 90 in the USSR and the others in groups no larger than 20 in other Eastern European countries. Few of them appear to be Communists; rather, they are mostly persons willing to take advantage of an opportunity for a higher education which few could have obtained at home.

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Several Communist-oriented splinter parties have developed as a result of splits within the PCB. In 1962 a group of young militants who favored Chinese-type violent revolution formed the Communist Party of Brazil (CPB). This group has had little success in recruiting, but some of its members may be active among radical students.

Late in 1967 another, larger group of dissidents led by Sao Paulo PCB Secretary General Carlos Marighella broke away because of the party's insistence on non-violent methods. It is not clear how many party members and sympathizers went with Marighella, but the PCB has had trouble reorganizing in such key states as Sao Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul. Marighella has opposed adopting any formal name for his group and strongly prefers that no organizational structure or bureaucracy be formed. He reportedly hopes to organize rural guerrilla groups and does not appear to give priority to student cadres.

The Marighella group itself did not remain united for long. One sector, probably led by Mario Alves de Souza Vieira and Jacob Gorener, has formed a movement known as the Revolutionary Brazilian Communist Party (PCBR) which reportedly has had some success in attracting former AP members in Guanabara who admire its emphasis on the primacy of the working class and its advocacy of violent methods. The PCBR seems likely to attract some of the more militant students. It may be responsible for some of the recent incidents of urban terrorism.

Yet another dissident Communist group is the Communist Workers' Party (POC), reportedly made up of radical leftist students. It has at least some contact with Marighella. Another splinter group, active in Rio de Janeiro, is the United Front of Calabouco Students, which takes its name from the Calabouco restaurant closed by the government in late March. Students who had gathered to protest the planned closing were broken up by police who shot and killed student Edson Souto, setting off the wave of violent demonstrations that lasted more than a week and that have recurred spasmodically ever since. The front has produced at least one important student leader, Elinor Mendes de Brito, and is continuing its efforts to broaden its support.

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Backing for the Students

Confronted with this amorphous array, security forces have had little success in monitoring, let alone curtailing student activities. Officials are frustrated by their inability to apprehend key student leaders, who usually operate with protecting goon squads. Only rarely have police successfully rolled up portions of student organizations. Police forces, who must inevitably feel as though they are nailing custard to the wall, eventually beat or arrest any student or bystander upon whom they can lay hands.

Such repression has led to charges of brutality and has been responsible for a general increase in public support for the students' legitimate demands. The spontaneous demonstrations of early April have given way to well-organized antigovernment protest. Radicals realize that the student body can be galvanized into a potent force. They can maneuver, if not completely control, students and are able to turn a protest against police excesses into a demonstration against the "dictatorship" of foreign capital. Undisciplined secondary students add to the confusion, particularly since they appear to operate outside of the effective control of any organization.

Vitally important support has been forthcoming from the clergy--some of whom, with the consent of the hierarchy, have participated in demonstrations. Such diverse leaders as the controversial archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Dom Helder Camara, and the moderate Cardinal of Rio de Janeiro, Dom Hamme de Barros Camara, both have given their blessings to the students. Dom Helder has been particularly clear in stating his belief that students necessarily will be part of social reform in Brazil, and therefore the Church must build ties to them. While more moderate churchmen have refrained from clear-cut encouragement for the students--and even Dom Helder has tried to discourage radicals--all but the most conservative have at least tacitly approved their cause.

The Church's new-found enthusiasm for social and educational reform has, however, deepened the

suspicion with which it is viewed by many "hardline" military men, some of whom regard the clergy as the most active force for subversion in Brazil. The growing coincidence of student-Church interests seems likely to add to the already simmering tension between the Church and the Costa e Silva government.

Student leaders have also sought to attract support from labor. Several unions have issued manifestos of support and some workers have participated in student demonstrations. In general, however, workers have shied away from too close an association--partly because of a traditional suspicion of "rich men's sons" who merely wish to exploit the workers' grievances for their own ends, and also from fear of government repression and a belief that association with radical students will lessen the effectiveness of worker protests. Such considerations militate against a meaningful worker-student alliance. Should they be overcome, the government would face serious trouble.

Opposition politicians have also been quick to try to capitalize on student demands. So far none has gained the support of the students, who regard such men as former President Juscelino Kubitschek and the outspoken Carlos Lacerda either as outmoded or opportunistic.

Prospects

Popular support for the students would not have crystallized had the government moved to implement needed reforms. The President's failure to understand the forces at work is clear from his repeated attribution of the disorders to professional agitators and to profiteers, opposition politicians, and persons whose rights were canceled after the 1964 revolution. He has frequently expressed his belief that there is a "vast, subversive plot," but fails to attribute any of the problems to his administration's neglect, apathy, or ineptitude.

Student demonstrations, no matter how well-organized and widespread, will not bring down the government. They may, however, cause divisions within

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the military over the handling of the continuing turmoil. Military dissatisfaction with the inept performance of President Costa e Silva and some of his key ministers is likely to increase in proportion to the disturbances.

Costa e Silva apparently is undecided as to what course to follow. He has been reluctant to impose a state of siege, fearing that it would force him to take one authoritarian step after another, but his room for maneuver is increasingly limited.

Mounting student and military frustration with government inaction, however, does not bode well for even short-range stability in Brazil.

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