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MEDICI'S VISIT

Nixon Christens Brazil a Sub-Imperial Power

The two day visit by General Medici to Washington on September 7-9 marked the first time the chief of a Latin American military government has been invited to the U.S. by President Nixon. In the words of *The New York Times*, the occasion "marked a break with American policy tradition, at least a decade old, of avoiding relations with military governments at the national diplomatic level."¹

The salient significance of Medici's visit was the warm reception and recognition the Brazilian dictator received from Nixon and the official U.S. endorsement of Brazil as a model for and a leader of the rest of Latin America. *The New York Times* editorialized,

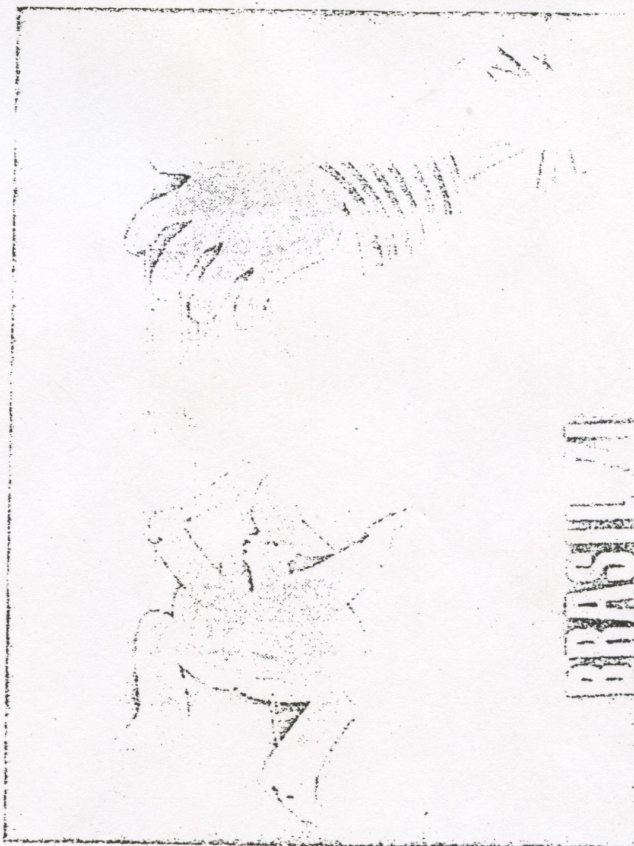
"President Nixon put his talks with President Medici of Brazil in the context of the 'vitally important' consultations he is conducting with this country's 'closest friends' prior to his visit next year to China and Russia. It was the kind of recognition and association Brazil has long sought from Washington."²

This placed Brazil in the major league of world powers -- alongside the other nations Nixon was "congratulating" before his trip: France, Great Britain, West Germany, Japan and Canada. The important point was Nixon's conferring with Brazil about China -- Medici's advisors told newsmen relations between China and Brazil (which does not recognize Peking) were not discussed³ -- rather, that he bestowed upon Brazil the mantle of U.S. sub-imperial power in the Western Hemisphere. In his toast welcoming the Brazilian president, Nixon proclaimed, "We know that as Brazil goes, the rest of that Latin American continent will go."⁴

A further indicator of the Washington-Brasilia relationship was the announcement by a White House spokesman that the two chiefs of state "have resolved to work together to give economic aid to other countries of the hemisphere."⁵ Brazil, which has received over \$2 billion worth of U.S. economic aid since the military dictatorship of 1964 and which last year became the largest recipient of World Bank loans, is evidently slated to receive as an aid and trade financing subcontractor. Brazil has already extended credits to other members of the Latin American Free Trade Association (LAFTA) to finance the import of Brazilian products: \$10 million each to Peru and Ecuador, \$15 million to

Uruguay, \$6 million to Chile, \$10 million to Bolivia and \$1 million each to five Central American countries.⁶

The outline of Brazil's sub-imperial role began to emerge in 1965 when it was the only Latin American country to provide a considerable contingent of troops to help "inter-Americanize" the U.S. invasion and occupation of Santo Domingo. This role was further solidified last year when it aided in the overthrow of the left-leaning Torres government in Bolivia.



Anti-regime poster shows Brazil as puppet of foreign powers.

The Washington Post, September 19, 1971

ria and when it assembled contingency plans -- "Operation Thirty Hours" -- for a military occupation of Uruguay in the event the leftist Broad Front won the November elections.⁷

Latin American military officers now receive anti-guerrilla training not only at U.S. facilities but also at Brazil's tough Centro de Instrução de Guerra na Selva (Jungle Warfare Training Center) in the heart of the Amazon.⁸ Further, Brazil has even taken on the role of supplying military hardware: in December 1971 Bolivia announced it would purchase 18 Brazilian-built Xavante jet aircraft to modernize her air force. The jets, built by the Brazilian state aircraft company, will replace U.S.-built World War II vintage P-51 fighters.⁹

The storm of foreign criticism that broke after Nixon publicly indicated that Brazil was the natural leader of Latin America was so great that Medici was forced to publicly decline the role. Within two days after Nixon's remarks Venezuela's President Rafael Caldera had protested against any U.S.-approved hegemony among Latin American nations. The governments of Peru and Argentina registered similar reaction soon after.¹⁰

Medici responded to these criticisms shortly after his return to Brazil in the first public presidential disclaimer of any continental ambitions. In his General's speech, read in his name by his son, a graduating class of engineering students, spoke of a general desire that "our progress be won without harming other peoples, without any pretension to hegemony, without leadership or imperialism...."

But to many South Americans the picture was quite clear: Brazil, which has almost half the continent's land mass and population, which has the largest standing army in Latin America, and which borders on all but two of the other countries of the continent, has been appointed sub-imperial watchdog and watchdog over its neighbors by the

world's major imperial power. Thus, it was symbolic, and perhaps no coincidence, that Medici, after a year of procrastinating and postponing the visit, flew to Washington only three days after Fidel Castro terminated his 25 day tour of Chile (with brief stopovers in Peru and Ecuador on his return to Cuba).

It appears that the long awaited Nixon policy on Latin America is finally emerging: support for those governments which welcome and provide incentives for U.S. investment, no matter how repressive their domestic policies may be -- the model being Brazil.

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7. Manchester Guardian/Le Monde Weekly, August 7, 1971.
8. See the Brazilian Information Bulletin #2, March 1971, p.11 for more details.
9. The New York Times, December 8, 1971.
10. The New York Times, December 31, 1971.

For More Information on Brazil

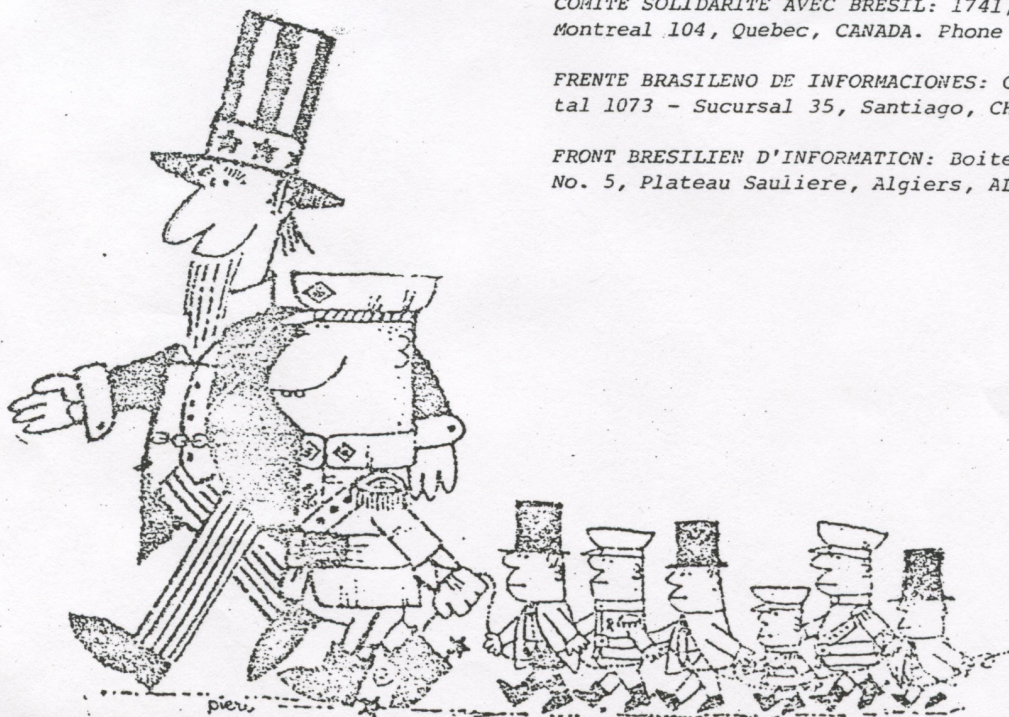
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Protesters Leave No Sanctuary for Medici

During his brief visit, Brazilian military dictator, General Medici and his U.S. hosts took special pains to avoid any unpleasant contact with protests over the repressive regime in Brazil and the U.S. support for this military dictatorship. First of all, the general's visit was shortened from the originally planned ten days in Washington and New York to five days, and then at the last minute to two and a half days in Washington, with no time in New York. The idea of addressing Congress was also dropped -- quite likely, said The Washington Post, "to avoid the possibility of a hostile demonstration."¹

In addition, Medici refused to attend any open press conferences where he would be forced to answer questions not on his agenda.² The visit, in fact, was pared down to the bare bones of two sessions with President Nixon and, according to the Post, "the ceremonies that the occasion demanded": a state dinner at the White House, a reception at the Brazilian Embassy, a rather pro forma speech at the headquarters of the Organization of American States (OAS), a visit to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and a White House reception hosted by Vice President Spiro Agnew.³

The voices of criticism and protest raised over General's visit came from many different sectors. Forty-three prominent U.S. clergy and laymen sent a letter to the dictator at his Blair House residence in Washington, calling for an impartial international team of observers to be permitted to investigate the innumerable reports of torture and repression coming from Brazil (see box).

In addition, the Bertrand Russell Tribunal announced the opening of preliminary investigations into the Brazilian dictatorship's crimes of torture against political prisoners (see text of announcement elsewhere in this Bulletin). As background to Medici's arrival, New York's local educational public television station (Channel 13), showed Saul Landau and Haskell Springer's film of interviews with victims of torture in Brazil. After the film, a panel of Latin American scholars discussed the current situation in Brazil to the TV audience.

The day before Medici's arrival, The Washington Post published an article by staff writer Dan Griffin listing three "awkward points that will probably not be heard of Medici" (see box).⁴ Evidently stung by such press in the U.S. capital's leading daily, the Brazilian government and ruling elite arranged for a one-page \$2,400 ad in the Post three days later. The ad was a reprint of a December 8th editorial in Rio's Jornal do Brasil which purported to rebut the Post's critique, but mainly sidestepped the issues. (The ad was supposedly sponsored by the Jornal do Brasil).

Wherever Medici appeared, he was met by protesters. At the White House, at the OAS, at the Brazilian Embassy, and at his Blair House residence. Customarily a foreign head of state receives a Presidential welcome in an elaborate ceremony at the secluded south lawn of the White House, sheltered from any protest demonstrations. But since December 7th was a rainy day, the dictator received a soggy short-order welcome at the White House north porch, in direct view of a 30 foot banner erected across the street in Lafayette Park. The banner, which read "Stop U.S. Complicity With Brazilian Torture" was erected by a group of Brazilian and American citizens called



The Committee Against Repression in Brazil (CARIB). Though they were directly facing it, neither Medici nor Nixon gave any indication that they saw the banner. However, after the Brazilian and U.S. national anthems were played, they both were ushered into the White House and U.S. Secret Service officials promptly erected several large green room dividers on the White House porch in front of both the doors and the windows, thus blocking any view that either Nixon or Medici had of the demonstrations across the street. Immediately afterwards, a Secret Service agent approached the demonstrators and told them to move their banner and poster display, or else his men would do it for them. Rather than have the agents destroy the banner, they took it down and moved it back 500 feet. As they were disassembling the display, the agent radioed the police on the White House porch who then removed the green blinders.⁵

On both days of Medici's visit, along with the banner, CARIB strung 30 posters between trees in Lafayette Park -- a display of the "dirty wash" of the U.S.-Brazilian relationship. It included statistical data of American commercial activities in Brazil, U.S. government-aided police programs in Brazil, distribution of Brazil's income, political cartoons from Latin America, and photos of re-enactments of actual tortures suffered in Brazilian jails accompanied by case histories of Brazilian political prisoners. Over 1,500 fact sheets on Brazilian repression were distributed to passers-by during the two day demonstration.

On the afternoon of December 8th, a local group called the Earth Union, put on a guerrilla theater performance depicting the Medici government's puppet relationship to Nixon and U.S. business interests and the tortures suffered by political prisoners in Brazilian jails. The conclusion of the performance portrayed the various sectors of the Brazilian people struggling, organizing and uniting to overthrow their brutal oppressors.

One protest Medici could not pretend to ignore occurred as he ended his address to 300 dignitaries and officials at the OAS. Peter Kami, a Brazilian citizen studying at the University of Tennessee, rose and shouted "Viva o Brasil livre" and then in Portuguese and English, "Down with torture in Brazil."⁶ Kami was quickly taken into custody by two Secret Service agents. But his words were broadcast

ive to Brazil over an international satellite hookup, and, according to reports from Brazil, they proved to be the highlight of the program for many viewers there who do not see anti-government protests on the heavily censored local networks. Kami was later released without charges, a fate which reportedly prompted one of Medici's aides to remark that the U.S. regime was too indulgent with Kami and that if the incident had happened in the Embassy, Brazilian territory, the student would not have gotten out alive.⁷

Shortly after the OAS outburst, while addressing a White House luncheon hosted by Spiro Agnew, Medici made his first public, though veiled, acknowledgement of criticism of his regime's repressive "security" measures:

The measures undertaken by Brazil...for the defense of its survival, laid us open to incomprehension and misunderstandings, which we regret, but which cannot make us swerve from the course we, in our sovereignty, have chosen.

Medici, in words reminiscent of past dictators, said that Brazil had adopted

security measures in order to defend ourselves from the schemes and intrigues of those who, resorting to violent methods of outside inspiration, have tried unsuccessfully to disturb our peace and tranquility and to destroy the foundations of a free society, which is striving to achieve social progress and economic development. Such is the society we are building...

Aside from creating a broader public awareness of repression in Brazil and the U.S. complicity in this repression, the protests and demonstrations around the Medici visit brought together a broad coalition of Brazilians and Americans who laid plans to build on this experience and expand their activities over the coming months.



The New York Times/George Tames
BRAZILIAN CHIEF BEGINS VISIT: President Emilio G. Medici with President Nixon at the White House.

The New York Times, December 8, 1971

FOOTNOTES

1. The Washington Post, December 7, 1971
2. "EPICA Analysis: Medici's visit to Washington", Ecumenical Program for Inter-American Communication and Action (EPICA), 1500 Farragut St., NW, Washington, D.C. 20011
3. The Washington Post, December 7, 1971
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5. L. Miguel Colonnese, "U.S. Press Criticized for Weak Coverage of Medici's Visit", LP News Service, December 24, 1971. See also "Grass-Root Response to the Medici-Nixon State Visit" by Harry Strharsky, Co-Coordinator of CARIB
6. The New York Times and The Washington Post, December 9, 1971
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8. The Washington Post, December 9, 1971

Three Awkward Questions for Medici

The following three points were raised in a Washington Post article on December 6, 1971, the day before General Garrastazu Medici arrived in Washington to begin his state visit with President Nixon. Staff writer Dan Griffin identified them as "... some awkward points that will probably not be asked of Medici...". Apparently stung by this criticism in the U.S. capital's leading newspaper, the Brazilian government and elite responded three days later with a full page \$2,400 ad in the Post -- a reprint of a Jornal do Brasil editorial attacking, but not refuting, the Post's "awkward points".

- Isn't Brazil's "economic miracle," which is on its way to producing a third straight year of 9 per cent growth in the GNP, really a case of the poor helping the rich? Recent figures suggest that the poorest 80 per cent of Brazilians got only about 27.5 per cent of the GNP in 1970, compared to 35 per cent in 1960; while the richest 5 per cent of Brazilians increased their share of the GNP from 44 to 50 per cent in the same period. Moreover, major Brazilian manufacturers expect exports, rather than expansion of Brazil's internal market, to produce their major sales growth, adding to the suspicion that Brazil's poor are being crossed off.

- When and how does Medici plan to restore democratic rule to Brazil? Shortly after being named

president, he said he intended to return the country to democracy by the end of his term, scheduled to expire on Mar. 15, 1974. Later he explained that he'd been setting out a goal, not making a promise. About a month after Medici's term ends, many of the thousand-odd politicians, labor leaders, social scientists, teachers and others who lost their political rights for 10 years are scheduled, theoretically, to get them back. What will be the political system then? Will they be allowed to enter it?

- Since his inauguration, Gen. Medici has held, in essence, the powers of Brazil's legislative and judicial branches as well as those of the executive. Why, then, did he need to take to himself, on Nov. 11, the power to decree secret laws on matters of national security?