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TO : Department of State

INFO: Amembassy, RIO DE JANEIRO

FROM : Amconsul, SAO PAULO

SUBJECT : University of São Paulo Physics Department

REF : Rio de Janeiro A-992 and Rio A-564

RECEIVED

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SEP 30 2 25 PM 1968

RS/AN
ANALYSIS BRANCH

DATE: September 27, 1968

Recent developments in the University of São Paulo Physics Department continue to be of interest because, from a purely scientific point of view, this department has been one of the all too few nuclei of good science in Brazil. The department has approximately 800 students in undergraduate and graduate training and offers a curricula recognized and accepted by leading institutions in the States, e. g., the University of Wisconsin. Research work within the department has for several years been of excellent quality by Brazilian standards and good quality by international standards. It is the acknowledged "center of excellence" in physics research in Brazil.

Unfortunately, the Physics Department has been rent for many years by dissensions, largely originating with leftist and nationalist oriented professors in the department and personal rivalries, the most recent of which was reported in Rio A-992. Without doubt, these dissensions have exerted an enervating influence on the department.

It is the impression of both Brazilian officials and knowledgeable American sources that despite this political dissension and the loss of some of the better professors to other faculties, the overall scientific quality of the department has remained remarkably unimpaired. Because of the importance of this department in the overall Brazilian 5-year plan for the development of science and technology, the Congen and Sciatt, however, have examined in as much depth as possible the effect that the current dissension may have on the long-term future of Brazilian physics generally and on the department in particular.

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São Paulo A-410

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It seems that leftist elements in the Physics Department, using some of the personnel at the instructor and assistant professor levels and the students, are, indeed, prepared to push the present dissensions to the point of destroying the department. Furthermore, there is evidence to indicate that these elements are capitalizing on legitimate student grievances to mobilize student opposition. Unfortunately, the objectives of the students are not clearly enunciated and the motives of the disruptive elements within the faculty are diverse.

By all indications, the recent resignation of Dr. Oscar SALA was a challenge to these forces rather than a serious resignation. It is not clear, however, that this has materially helped matters. The students of the Physics Department have been on strike since May and there is no immediate prospect of their returning to classes despite the fact that students in most other departments are back in class at the University. It does not appear that any students will graduate this year from the Physics Department. Although classwork has come to a standstill, students are pursuing research work which can be continued without the benefit of classes.

COMMENT:

It appears that the conclusion in the last paragraph of Rio A-992 is justified. More seriously, unless the current situation is resolved within a reasonable time and students as well as professors can return to productive work, there is a question whether or not the scientific quality of the department can be preserved. If it cannot be, an important building block in the Brazilian National Research Council's 5-year plan for the development of science and technology in Brazil will have been damaged. If past history can be taken as a guide, actual disintegration of the department is not likely to occur. More probably, progress will be simply retarded at this important point in the evolution of Brazilian science.

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