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TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE RECEIVED
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INFO : Rio de Janeiro

OCT 29 8 36 AM 1969

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
OCT 30 1969

FROM : Amconsul, BELO HORIZONTE

DATE: October 21, 1969

SUBJECT : Professors at Federal University of Minas Gerais "retired"
by Federal Decree.

REF : --

1. In the last four weeks seventeen professors at the Federal University of Minas Gerais have been "retired" by decree-laws issued by the governing military tirumvirate. Included in the group are seven who have been to the United States on grants of one kind or another from the U.S. Government or the Ford Foundation and another professor who is the head of the Cultural Committee of the Bi-National Center here in Belo.

a) Their names and a brief biographical sketch follow:

1. Decree-law published September 12.

Rodolfo de Abreu Bhering, director of the faculty of Economic Sciences, was a well regarded economist who has collaborated with government planners in preparing a number of economic studies. He is not easily identified with any political ideology and his inclusion on the list was a surprise.

Lourival Vilela Viana, was the dean of the law faculty. He was a leader grantee in 1968. His "retirement" was unexpected.

Julio Barbosa, director of the Political Science Department, was the professor in charge of the graduate political science program at the University, a Ford Foundation project. He visited the United States on a Ford Foundation grant. In 1965, IPM (security) proceedings were brought against him but never completed.

Amilcar Viana Martins, professor in the faculty of medicine, is one of the leading Brazilian authorities in Chagas disease and the director of the Minas Museum of Natural History. He was also charged in IPM hearings in 1965.

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Rui de Sousa, director of the planning council of the University, was a professor of commercial law at the faculty of law. In 1964 he was imprisoned and later charged under the IPM proceedings, but never convicted.

Osório da Rocha Diniz, teacher at the economics faculty, is a member of the Minas Commerce Association and was a member of the fiscal committee of Petrobras. He was briefly a prisoner in 1964 and cited in the IPM proceedings in 1965.

Sami Sirihal, a professor of literature at the School of Philosophy, was cited in IPM proceedings in 1965.

Fabio Lucas Gomes, member of the Minas Academy of Letters, poet, literary critic and professor at the faculty of economics, was a leader grantee in 1967. He was named in the IPM hearings in 1965.

Silvio de Carvalho Vasconcellos, professor of architecture, is regarded as one of the most prominent architectural historians in the country. An author of books and articles on various other subjects, Vasconcellos is one of the outstanding intellects of Minas. He is the head of the cultural committee of the Bi-National Center in Belo and the architect who designed the Center's recently completed building. IPM proceedings were brought against him in 1965.

Tarcisio Ferreira, book seller, is a professor of Latin at the school of philosophy. He was cited in IPM action in 1965.

Eder Simões is a professor at the philosophy school.

Guido Antonio de Almeida, teaches at the philosophy school and was cited in the IPM proceedings of 1965. He is a former Fulbright scholar (FY-61).

Maria Andrea Rios Loliola, teaches at the University in Juiz de Fora.

Celson Diniz Pereira is a physicist at the University of Minas Gerais.

2. Decree-law published October 17.

Gerson de Brito Melo Boson was the Rector of the University and was in the United States on a leader grant when the decree was published. Although his forced retirement had been rumoured for some time it nevertheless came as a surprise.

Aluisio Pimenta, an ex-Rector of the University, was in Chile on contract for the IDB and has not been active here recently. He was a leader grantee in 1964.

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Pedro Parafita de Bessa was the dean of the school of Philosophy and active in the Ford Foundation graduate program in political science at the University. He had previously visited the United States on a Ford Foundation grant.

2. Generally astute political observers here do not attempt to rationalize this list on the basis of subversion or corruption, the justification usually cited by the Government. Those on the list have for the last several years avoided any political activities or identification. None could seriously be charged with corruption and only one has a previous history of close association with extreme leftist causes. The Government, these observers contend, is now settling accounts with those against whom process (IPM) was begun in 1965 for various reasons but never completed. Others attempt to explain the list as the personal whim of high officials in the Ministry of Education in Rio who are acting, willy nilly, on the basis of information supplied by various persons here. To support this accusation these observers cite several well known leftists in the faculty who thus far have escaped sanction.

3. Other sources who were involved in the revolution in 1964 and have continued to maintain their influence within revolutionary circles here admit the seeming ideological inconsistency but contend that the lists were nevertheless compiled on a rational, common standard: responsibility. Professor Boson, these sources admit, could never be considered a subversive himself, but when faced by pressures from subversive elements within the university he failed to exercise strong leadership. His attitude, they say, was weak and permissive. The same grounds are cited as the basis for the retirement of the several faculty deans. These sources claim that subversion in the University can be contained only by men of determination who are willing to stand up against it. The process of cleaning out the permissive types will have to be continued for some time yet if the subversive threat is to be countered.

COMMENT. The latter view is probably a reasonably accurate explanation of the two retirement lists. Certainly very few of the professors included could be considered leftists or subversives. But whatever the basis, the result has been to seriously demoralize the faculty at the University and undermine higher education in this state. The rector, the deans and key professors in social science faculties have been eliminated. This has been a blow to the university which it will be long in overcoming.

BROWN, Acting

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Embassy Rio Comment: We have had the opportunity to discuss the forced retirement of Rector Gerson Boson with the principal figure in the Ministry of Education responsible for "cleansing" the educational system of "subversives" and other undesirables. He explained that the brunt of the charges against Gerson Boson was his systematic favoring of militant leftists among the student body and the faculty. According to that version, Gerson Boson should have actively taken the initiative in suppressing leftist disturbances and simultaneously have provided encouragement for rightists and "democratic" students. (See Embassy Memcon of October 17, 1969.) An additional factor in his "cassation" was personal malice arising out of Boson's dealings with the Meira Mattos investigating committee in 1968. When presented by that committee with a detailed list of questions about subversion in his university, he responded with a defiant plea for university autonomy. The MEC source made it clear that his challenge to Meira Mattos group eliminated any possibility that his alleged leadership deficiencies as rector might have been overlooked.

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