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INFO : Amembassy RIO DE JANEIRO  
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF  
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
APR 17 1969

FROM : Amconsul RECIFE

DATE: April 7, 1969

SUBJECT : Patterns of Punitive Action in Universities in the Northeast

REF : Rio A-181 *Edw 9 Bray*

The three attached memorandums of conversation provide additional details on the patterns of punitive actions on campuses in the Northeast.

Enclosure 1 covers a conversation with Father Geraldo de Freitas, Rector of the Pernambuco Catholic University. While welcoming Institutional Act No. 5 as a means for ending the trend toward anarchy on campus, Father Freitas is strongly critical of recent punitive measures aimed at the university. He discusses efforts to force him to apply sanctions against allegedly subversive students and his determination to resist such pressures.

Enclosure 2 covers a conversation with Roberto Cavalcanti, Professor of Economics at the Pernambuco Federal University. Cavalcanti attributes repressive tendencies at the Economics Faculty (where 13 students were recently suspended) to personal and professional rivalries among professors. He finds both direct and indirect military pressure on the campus on the increase.

Enclosure 3 covers a conversation with Maria de Lourdes Soares, Administrative Assistant to the Rector of the Federal University of Paraiba. Miss Soares claims that more than 200 students have been prevented from registering at the Federal University of Paraiba for political reasons. The technique being used to deny enrollment is the selective refusal of scholarship aid on political grounds.

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These reports combine with those previously submitted to give an overview of the widespread purge now underway on the campuses in the Northeast. The following specific reports of punitive action have now come to our attention:

PERNAMBUCO: A total of 20 students from two faculties of the Federal University have been suspended for three years under the terms of Decree 477 of February 25, 1969 (see Recife 275 and 298). During the week of March 24 a series of preventive arrests of student activists was made in anticipation of protest activity during the ceremonies commemorating the anniversary of the 1964 revolution. In addition, numerous lists of "subversive" students and professors are reportedly circulating among the faculties of the several universities and Fourth Army headquarters.

PARAIBA: Scores of student "agitators" and "troublemakers" were reportedly denied matriculation when classes resumed on March 3 (one report set the number at 63 -- see Recife Report No. 9). More than 200 additional students have reportedly been blocked from enrollment through the systematic denial of scholarship aid on political grounds (see above). Twenty-seven contract professors have reportedly been dismissed.

CEARA: Ten students were expelled in early February, prior to the resumption of classes and before Decree 477. Two of the ten were subsequently convicted of violation of the recently-expanded National Security Law for leading the attack on USIS offices in Fortaleza on April 1, 1968 (see Rio 2373). Last week four other Fortaleza students (and one lawyer) were given sentences ranging from six to 35 months for alleged subversive activities as defined by the expanded National Security Law (see also Recife A-35).

THE TOOLS OF REPRESSION: Available information indicates a wide variety of methods being used to take punitive action against suspect students and professors, including the following:

Preventive arrest orders: Used in Fortaleza against the 10 students who were later expelled and in Pernambuco in the roundup of students prior to commemorative ceremonies celebrating the 1964 revolution;

Denial of matriculation: Used extensively throughout the region when classes resumed on March 3;

Denial of scholarship assistance: Used on large scale in João Pessoa and perhaps elsewhere as well;

Suspensions under Decree 477: Thus far used only in Pernambuco.

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Prosecution under expanded National Security Law: Used against 6 students in Fortaleza.

Refusal to renew teaching contracts: Used to dismiss 27 professors in Paraíba.

IMPLICATIONS: The picture which emerges from the foregoing is one of widespread and growing, but often indiscriminate repression on the campus. <sup>1/</sup> An air of uncertainty and suspicion prevails among students and professors alike. Some professors are taking advantage of the uncertain circumstances in an attempt to settle old scores against colleagues. In the internecine battles among professors it is possible that orthodoxy and fealty to the "revolutionary objectives" will be counted more heavily than the ability of the professor or the quality of his instruction. Similarly, the systematic removal of large numbers of students from the university is likely to create a ready pool of recruits for those--i.e. the PCBR and the Margahellists--who advocate clandestine activity and terrorism. The haphazard manner in which punitive actions on campus are being managed offers little cause for encouragement that the authorities have given adequate consideration to these problems. All in all, it is clear that the witch-hunt is one aspect of this phase of the revolution on the campuses of the Northeast.

<sup>1/</sup> The indiscriminate application of punitive measures is not without its positive side. We have had several reports that attendance at class by professors occupying lifetime chairs (catedráticos) has improved significantly since IA-5, apparently out of fear that substandard performance might be used as a criterion for punitive action. (We know of no instance where this test has been applied.) This, too, has its negative side, however, since, as one professor pointed out, the instructors teaching in the place of seldom-appearing catedráticos are often far better teachers than the catedráticos themselves.

*[Signature]*  
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ENCLOSURE 1  
RECIFE A-36

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

March 25, 1969

SUBJECT: Punitive Actions Against Students and University Reform

PARTICIPANTS: Father Geraldo de Freitas, Rector of Pernambuco  
Catholic University,  
Richard H. Melton, Political Officer

PLACE: Rector's Office in Recife

(Father Freitas, a 41-year-old Jesuit, has served as Rector of the Pernambuco Catholic University since 1966. He is known both for his moderation and his independence. He was strongly critical of last year's wave of student disorders which he thought to be incited by "international forces" alien to the university community. Nevertheless he continues to be a stout defender of student liberties and their right to legitimate criticism and dissent.)

\* \* \*

Father Freitas made the following comments of interest:

IA-5 and PUNITIVE ACTIONS: Institutional Act No. 5 was in a sense welcome in that it put an end to a trend toward anarchy on the campus. On the other hand, punitive actions recently taken in the university field have gone too far. A request was received from the Fourth Army to draw up a list of "subversives" for punitive action under the terms of Decree 477. <sup>1/</sup> The Catholic University refused to submit such a list. The Rector and the directors of the faculties of the university in declining the request stated that they would assume full responsibility for the conduct of their students. If the students henceforth committed acts considered to be subversive by the authorities, university officials would then take appropriate punitive action. The Rector thus places himself in a difficult position with the authorities on one side and the students on the other; neither of these groups are subject to his control. If the Rector is forced to act by either group, the situation will then have to be re-evaluated.

<sup>1/</sup> Decree 477 of February 25 provided procedures for the suspension of students for three years and professors for five years if, after a summary investigation, they were found to have engaged in subversive activities (see Rio 1470).

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ENCLOSURE 1

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UNIVERSITY REFORMS: Recent university reforms decreed by the federal government are aimed primarily at federally-supported universities but will also have a definite effect on private universities. The Pernambuco Catholic University, for its part, is attempting to meet many of the norms established by the reform measures. The Rector is attempting to attract full-time professors but this and other modifications will be extremely difficult. Funds simply are unavailable to effect the necessary changes. Some so-called experts have suggested that the solution to the university problem may be in reducing the number of institutions of higher education so as to improve the quality of instruction. This is a specious argument. What is needed is more rather than fewer universities. Perhaps the goal of greater specialization might be achieved by concentrating high cost technical courses in federal institutions while emphasizing non-technical subjects in private institutions.

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ENCLOSURE 2  
RECIFE A-36

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

April 2, 1969

SUBJECT: Punitive Actions Against Students and Professors  
in the Northeast

PARTICIPANTS: Roberto Cavalcanti, Professor of Economics,  
Pernambuco Federal University;  
Richard H. Melton, Political Officer

PLACE: Consulate General, Recife

(In addition to teaching comparative economics at the Pernambuco Federal University, Cavalcanti also directs the university's graduate economics program. He holds a master's degree in economics from Columbia University, and is widely regarded as one of the foremost young economists in the Northeast. Through his association with the Inter-American University Association (Sage) student exchange program, which he has coordinated in Pernambuco for the past two years, he has developed wide contacts with the left-of-center student leadership.)

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Cavalcanti made the following comments of interest:

SUMMARY

Recent suspension of students at the Pernambuco Federal University reflects growing pressure from the authorities to purge the campus of all "radical" students and professors. The Director of the Economics Faculty acted prematurely in suspending 13 students without awaiting an official interpretation of the government decree providing authority for such expulsions. The University Rector has refused to assume responsibility for the director's action, which nevertheless will probably stand. A list of nine professors to be disciplined has also been drawn up and submitted to the Director of the Economics Faculty. No suspensions of professors are expected in the near future although those suspect are being kept under "observation" for the time being. Principal motivation for the preparation of the list seems to have been personal and professional rivalries among professors rather than questions of subversion. In Paraiba, 27 professors have been dismissed. Military pressure, both direct and indirect, is becoming an increasingly significant factor on the campus.

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ENCLOSURE 2  
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PRESSURE AGAINST STUDENTS: The suspension of 20 students from two faculties of the Pernambuco Federal University during the past month reflects growing pressure from the authorities to institute a wholesale purge of the university. <sup>1/</sup> The Director of the Economics Faculty, however, jumped the gun in suspending 13 students. He acted without awaiting an official interpretation of the government decree providing authority for such punitive action. The director subsequently sought to have the rector sanction the suspensions, but the rector simply ignored the request and returned the expulsion documents to the school's director without comment. Since the 13 students were expelled without following the procedures outlined in the decree, they retain some hope that their suspensions may somehow be lifted. They have appealed the director's action in the courts in the hope that they will be reinstated. It is highly doubtful, however, that the suspensions will be relaxed on technical grounds.

The three-year suspensions meted out by the Economics Faculty will bar affected students for an even longer period. According to university regulations, if a student is out of school for two consecutive years he must enroll again as a freshman, which would mean repeating the tedious vestibular process all over again. Thus, in practice, the suspensions mean an interruption of four, five, six, or even more years in an academic program.

As an interesting sidelight, the list of students suspended from the Economics Faculty included Margarida da Costa Carvalho, the daughter of the brother of the director. This step was taken with the utmost reluctance, but the director felt himself forced to take it. It would have been difficult for him to justify the other suspensions to even the most credulous at the university if Margarida, one of the principal student activists at the university, had not been included.

PRESSURE AGAINST PROFESSORS: Professors at the Federal University are also under increasing pressure. A list containing the names of nine professors to be suspended at the Economics Faculty has been circulating on campus for the past month. (Roberto stated that, in addition to his own name, the list included Nelson Saldanha, Luiz Oliveira, and Germano Coelho, former Secretary of Education in the Arraes Administration.) It had originally been thought that the list had been drawn up by the Fourth Army but it was later discovered that it had its origin in the Economics Faculty itself.

<sup>1/</sup> On March 12, the Economics Faculty suspended 13 students for a period of three years for alleged subversive activities under the terms of Decree 477 of February 25, 1969. On March 18, the Dentistry Faculty suspended 7 students for an equal period under the same decree (see Recife 275 and 298).

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ENCLOSURE 2  
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Leaving aside the flimsy evidence of alleged subversive activities by the nine professors, it seems clear that the principal motivation leading to the preparation of the list was personal and professional rivalries among professors. This is borne out by the fact that all three of the professors in the school's graduate program were included on the list. Insufficiently prepared teachers who teach in the undergraduate program have long been jealous of their better qualified colleagues in the graduate program. The purge list is being used to vent their frustrations.

(As an indication of the irrational approach being employed, Roberto noted that one of the principal reasons he had come under suspicion was the fact that he included a section on Marxism in his course in comparative economics. It was difficult, he said, to see how he could be expected to cover his subject without a thorough explanation of Marxist economic concepts. COMMENT: Ironically, the local Department of Political and Social Order (DOPS) recently announced their intention to institute courses in Marxism for their own personnel to enable them to better cope with the problem of subversion.

Roberto also noted the fact that he had acted during the past two years as the Pernambuco coordinator for the Inter-American University Association (Sage) student exchange program also made him suspect in the eyes of some military men. Even more damaging, however, was the fact that last year he had ranked number one among the 80-some faculty members at the Economics Faculty in a student poll evaluating their professors. This, he said, made him a marked man.)

Professors, however, have been hardest hit in Paraíba. There, 27 professors have been forced out of their teaching positions when their contracts were not renewed. Most were in the philosophy faculties, but three economics professors were also included. This total includes professors at both the João Pessoa and Campina Grande faculties.

MILITARY INFLUENCE BEHIND THE SCENES: A retired Army General, Henry Wilson, who is a professor at the Economics Faculty, is behind much of the witch-hunting there. The surprisingly large percentage of military officers enrolled in the Economics Faculty is another contributing factor. (Roberto noted that 11 of the 90-some students he teaches this year are military officers. The percentage was even higher last year, he said). The number of officers who are students is particularly high in economics, engineering, and other technical fields. University attendance is encouraged by the Armed Forces. This is in line with the expanded national security concept which envisages greater military participation in key sectors of political, social and economic activity.

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ENCLOSURE 3  
RECIFE A-36

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

April 2, 1969

SUBJECT: University Cassations in Paraiba

PARTICIPANTS: Maria de Lourdes Soares, Administrative Assistant  
to the Rector, Federal University of Paraiba;  
Robert A. Riccio, Cultural Affairs Officer

PLACE: Consulate General, Recife

(In addition to her position as Administrative Assistant to the Rector, Miss Soares is in charge of the administration of all scholarship assistance provided by the Federal University of Paraiba. She is also a professor of German and an accomplished linguist. During her student days she traveled to the United States in 1962 under the young leaders program. She was President of the Academic Directorate of the Philosophy Faculty of the Federal University at the time of the 1964 revolution, when she was considered by the authorities to be a "leftist." Over the years she has proven to be one of the two or three most thoughtful and reliable USIS sources in Paraiba. She recently won a Fulbright scholarship and will travel to the United States later this year.)

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According to Miss Soares, more than 200 students at the Federal University of Paraiba have been prevented from registering because of political reasons. The technique being used to force students out of the university is the refusal of scholarship assistance, even the limited amount available, on political grounds. The punitive process is being administered by the Rector's Chefe de Gabinete without the direct involvement of the Rector, who assiduously seeks to avoid political entanglements. Thus, the Chefe de Gabinete is allowed a free hand to act as a "political surveyor."

Punitive measures have also been turned against the faculty. Seven professors of the Faculty of Human Sciences alone have been dismissed. The "foreigners" among the professors have been "repatriated" to France or "São Paulo." (COMMENT: We had previously heard from other sources that a major purge of allegedly subversive students was underway in Paraiba. The foregoing report, however, provides the most detailed information to date on the methods being used to accomplish this end. It is the first indication which has come to our attention of the systematic denial of scholarship assistance on political grounds.)

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