

TELEGRAM

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ACTION: Secstate WASHINGTON 170

Date: March 24, 1966
11:17 a.m.

INFO: Amembassy RIO DE JANEIRO 198
Amconsul SKO PAULO 32

Subj: Reaction to President's Press Conference

1. President Castello Branco's comments on succession in his March 22 press conference chief topic of conversation in congressional corridors March 23. Consensus of ARENA congressmen was that press conference reinforced what already known, namely that WarMin Costa e Silva is not preferred candidate of Castello Branco. Some well-informed journalists went further, interpreting President's refusal to change electoral residence requirements as effort drive wedge between Costa e Silva and Generals Justino Alves Bastos and Amaury Kruei.

2. General feeling among knowledgeable ARENA deputies was that, regardless of President's delphic utterances (perhaps because of them?), decisions on succession will be taken soon. ARENA scheduled to be officially brought into being on March 31, second anniversary of anti-Goulart revolt. Costa Cavalcanti, military and WarMin spokesman in Chamber, telling fellow deputies that WarMin will remain silent until then, but afterwards will speak out as candidate and begin

*Pol-14
President's Press Conference*

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outlining his program. Monteiro de Castro, leading member of ex-UDN inner Minas circle, commented that President would probably reconcile himself to Costa e Silva's candidacy, that in spite of call for more candidates, Costa e Silva remained only candidate, and others were merely names; told me he expected things to move quickly in April. Adolfo de Oliveira and others tended dismiss presidential comments as irrelevant, taking position that without military support nobody can get ARENA nomination, and Costa e Silva has military support.

3. Bilac Pinto told me last night he does not expect leave for Paris before end next month, so he should be present for presumed April denouement. In Congress, Bilac Pinto widely viewed as President's preferred civilian choice as successor.

4. Re Aduino Cardoso interview (Riotel 2084), Chamber president told me yesterday he issued call for more ARENA candidates because it "necessary to clear air." Stated further he thought Costa e Silva would not object in least to interview, because he much too intelligent a man. We informed ARENA Vice President Teodulo Albuquerque also planning issue similar statement calling on other ARENA hopefuls to step forward.

5. Comment: President's continuing ambiguity on succession question has caused normal pre-convention jitters

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to appear in Congress. Feeling among ARENA deps, however, is that jitters will disappear as soon as party chooses candidate. Opposition MDB, at least for time being, merely watching succession maneuvers in administration camp.

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