

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

XK POL 15 DR112
POL 13 FRENTE AMPLA

Date: September 10, 1967

Subjects: The Frente Ampla; MDB; Costa e Silva Administration

Place: Hotel Nacional, Brasilia

SUBJECT

Participants: Federal Deputy Hermano Alves (MDB-Guanabara)
Claude Erbsen, Associated Press Bureau
Chief in Rio de Janeiro
Arnold Isaacs, Brazilian Correspondent Baltimore Sun
Melvyn Levitsky, Political Officer Brasilia

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1. The reporting officer, who was discussing the Belem-Brasilia highway with ERBSEN and ISAACS, participated in their conversation with Federal Deputy Hermano ALVES, himself a former journalist who still occasionally writes editorials for Correio da Manha. Alves, who is a member of the youthful, radical wing of the opposition MDB and a supporter of Carlos LACERDA's Frente Ampla (Broad Front), commented on the Frente, the MDB and the Costa e Silva administration. A summary of his remarks follows.

2. Support for the Frente Ampla. Alves commented that the Frente Ampla was in the process of lining up support. He said the Frente's contacts with the military had produced a "good reaction." There was a great deal of dissatisfaction within the military due to the inertia of the present administration, although there was no desire for a return to the past. Many military men wanted the government to take a "developmentalist" line, but it was not doing so. Alves claimed that the only generals who were really against the Frente were "Generals" Daniel KRIEGER (Senator and ARENA's National President) and Deputy Ernani SATIRO (ARENA floor leader in the Chamber of Deputies). In the lower echelons of the Armed Forces, there was a great desire for the military to stay out of politics, because of a frustration brought about by not being able to understand the complicated political scene.

3. Alves felt that popular support for the Frente Ampla was widespread, but that its true magnitude had not yet been shown. The

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Frente's congressional backing would also increase with time. At present, Alves said there were 30 or 40 Congressmen committed to the Frente, a "majority" from the MDB. Some were reluctant to join because of Carlos Lacerda's dominant role. He mentioned that MDB Deputies Marcio Moreira ALVES and Doin VIERA (who are young and of the same nationalistic line as Alves) were taking this position. He had told them that if he could be a member of the Frente Ampla, anyone could, since he had been the only journalist imprisoned by Lacerda when the latter was Governor of Guanabara. Alves said that ex-President Joao GOULART is definitely in the movement, but that ex-President Janio QUADROS as usual "is and isn't." In response to a question, Alves said the ex-Governor of Rio Grande do Sul, Leonel BRIZOLA was not in the Frente, but that he viewed it favorably. Referring to Juscelino KUBITSCHER, Alves said that the former President would win a popular election today, but not in two or three years, implying that Kubitschek's popularity was waning.

4. The Frente's Objectives. Alves named the Frente's main goal as the fight for direct elections. After this was won, a host of other "redemocratization" measures, such as a general amnesty, the abrogation of certain authoritarian laws and the revision of the party system, would be called for. A thread linking all Frente supporters was the desire for the return of a policy of "economic development." Alves said everyone knew of Lacerda's driving ambition for the Presidency, and that direct elections would benefit him most, however, the general benefits of the Frente and the attainment of its goals outweighed Lacerda's personal objectives. According to Alves, Lacerda was at present the only man who could bring the "popular mobilization" the Frente was after.

5. As a sidelight, Alves said that the anti-CASTELLO BRANCO editorial by journalist Helio FERNANDES was not written specifically to bring on a political crisis. Fernandes idolized Lacerda and had wanted to show his courage to his mentor. Commenting on the Frente's organization, Alves said Federal Deputy Renato ARCHER (MDB-Maranhão) was a good choice as the movement's executive secretary. What many people did not know, was that Archer not only represented Kubitschek, but also Lacerda and even Janio Quadros.

6. The MDB. Alves felt that MDB was a false creation, and could not mobilize anyone, because of its diversity. This contrasted with the situation of the Frente Ampla, which, although diverse, was not a party and was unified by the struggle for the return of democracy. There was, therefore, no incompatibility in having former political enemies in the movement at the same time. Alves said, "COSTA E SILVA himself could join."

7. The Costa e Silva Administration. Alves felt President Costa e Silva was badly prepared for his position and that he offered

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the country no leadership. He contrasted the President to Castello Branco, who at least was firm and always supported his Ministers despite his other faults. Because of Costa e Silva's indecisiveness, Alves said, there already were splits in his cabinet. Each Minister was going his own way without direction and at least half a dozen wanted to succeed Costa e Silva. This he implied, gave an opening to the Frente. Alves felt, however, that Costa e Silva would serve out his full term. Of the Ministers, Alves said Transport Minister Mario ANDREAZZA, Foreign Minister MAGALHÃES PINTO and Labor Minister Jarbas PASSARINHO were the best. On the other hand, he believed Minister of the Interior ALBUQUERQUE LIMA, because of his shrewdness, intelligence and military support, was currently in the best position to become President after Costa e Silva.

8. Comment

Alves, like many Frente advocates, expressed optimism regarding the movement's chances and perhaps overestimated its general acceptance within the country. His comment about the "good reaction" within the military is almost certainly an exaggeration. Alves's remarks indicate that the Frente may be having greater difficulty than expected in obtaining firm political support. The "30 to 40" deputies figure, for instance, is lower than preliminary estimates of congressional adherents to the movement. The reluctance noted by Alves indicates that many political figures are taking a wait-and-see attitude toward the Frente Ampla--both regarding its general orientation and directions, and the administration's reactions to the Lacerda-led grouping.

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