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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: October 24, 1975

SUBJECT: Political Atmosphere in Brasilia, Views about President Geisel and the Jewish community in Brazil

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Eliezer Burlá, President of the Rio de Janeiro Jewish Federation

PLACE: Dr. Burlá's Office, Rio de Janeiro

Burlá said he returned to Rio de Janeiro the evening of October 23, 1975 after spending two days in Brasilia. He spoke to Gen. (Ret.) Golbery do Couto e Silva, Chief of the President's Civilian Household, bureaucrats in the Foreign Ministry, several members of Congress and his contacts in the military. The overall impression he returned with was one of depression, insecurity and doubt.

Opinion about President Geisel

For the first time, Burlá heard a lot of criticism of President Geisel. The critics said that when Geisel came to power, they considered him intelligent and strong. His performance has been a disappointment. Some of his critics have come to the conclusion that the President has some bad advisors but they cannot identify them.

Celio Borja (ARENA-RJ), President of the Chamber of Deputies, told Burlá that when he returned from Europe after heading Brazil's delegation to the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting, he had called on President Geisel to pass on some of the gloomy economic forecasts the legislators had heard in Europe from famous economists. The President reportedly scoffed at Borja and told him that, according to information available to him, the US and Europe were on their way to full economic recovery and everything would soon be all right. Later, Borja spoke again to the President and told him that the indicators for Brazil, political and economic, were not good. The President reportedly laughed and told Borja that the latter was simply depressed; things were really pretty good. Reportedly, Borja said he would not return to the President's office for that sort of treatment.

There was agreement that Geisel's options had been severely

(Drafting Office and Officer)

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limited by the "system". Geisel's critics said he had come to power with a "blank check" but had demonstrated not only his ineptness but also that many of his decisions were out of step with the prevailing views of the "system". The "system" had therefore told him which of his decisions and policies it did not like and had severely limited the President's options.

Military Attitudes toward the Government's Economic Plans

All the officers Burlá spoke to agreed with the risk contracts decision on the grounds that the economic situation and Brazil's national security required it. There was, however, considerable disenchantment expressed with the economic planning that had caused Brazil's vulnerability and therefore had required the decision.

Most of the military officers told Burlá that the civilian economic planners had failed primarily because their plans and projections were too theoretical and not based on reality. A few of those officers discussed the idea of replacing the civilian economic planners with military planners. The argument made was that military planners had their feet firmly planted on the ground and were realistic in outlook.

Burlá mentioned something that did not make too much sense to him. A friend of Burlá's is a respected writer on economics for Jornal do Brasil. This friend reportedly told Burlá that Finance Minister Simonsen had recently suggested that he continue to write articles and columns criticizing the second national development plan (PND II). Reportedly, Simonsen said quite seriously "a few more columns and we can bury the second PND for good".

Support of the Government's Programs.

According to Burlá, Golbery was pessimistic about the ARENA's ability to support the Government's programs. Golbery pointed out that the Geisel Government and the Revolution had done a great many good things in the social sphere but did not receive any recognition. The ARENA Party did not appear to be able to pull itself together and support and "sell" the Government's programs or achievements. He spoke seriously, said Burlá, of engaging private public relations firms like Burla's to carry out a pro-government propaganda campaign. Burlá told Golbery he was prepared to do the job. Comment. The reporting officer reminded Burlá that he had discussed such a pro-government public relations campaign with Golbery several months ago and nothing came of it. Burlá agreed but said it seemed more serious this time. End Comment.

Anti-Zionist Resolution and Jewish Community in Brazil.

The Jewish community believes that Foreign Minister Azeredo

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da Silveira is personally responsible for the Brazilian vote in the UN in support of the arab sponsored resolution equating zionism with racism. The jewish community is not surprised by da Silveira's position but is puzzled as to why Geisel and Golbery went along with it. Comment. Daniel Klabin, another prominent member of the Brazilian jewish community, in discussing the Brazilian vote with our minerals officer, confirmed what Burlá said about the decision being laid at the feet of da Silveira. End Comment.

Burlá said that the jewish community believes the Geisel Government is serious about not permitting any overt anti-semitism in Brazil. The Government had been true to its word and ended any further discussion of the alleged "jewish sector" of the communist party (PCB). This smear, Burlá recalled, had been spread publicly by the police in São Paulo (DOPS). According to Burlá, the only thing now bothering the Brazilian jewish community is the Government's decided pro-Arab tilt.

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