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POL-15

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: November 13, 1970

SUBJECT: Who's in Charge?

PARTICIPANTS: Marcello Mininni, Italian Consul General  
Manoel de Figueiredo Ferraz, Judge of the Tribunal de Contas of the City of São Paulo  
Robert F. Corrigan, American Consul General

1. In connection with the considerable speculation and conflicting reports as to whether President Medici may be more a figurehead of the revolutionary establishment or its undisputed leader, I report the following for what it may be worth. Last night at a social gathering my Italian colleague drew me aside. He wondered whether Medici, in his recent speech in Porto Alegre declaring AI-5 would remain in effect, had spoken on his own or had been told to speak in that vein. I said I did not know but had an impression Medici was a strong leader and that it would be hard to push him around. He indicated he questioned the extent of the President's autonomy.

2. As we were standing near Judge Manoel de Figueiredo Ferraz, former President of the City Council and son-in-law of the late ex-Governor Adhemar de Barros, I suggested we broach this subject with him. We did.

3. Manoel went on at length to the effect that the military establishment had carefully chosen Medici and that it was entirely clear that the latter would be but a primus inter pares who would faithfully execute decisions made within the system rather than be its undisputed leader. Thus, Manoel asserted rather dramatically, the President had been "handed" the Porto Alegre speech to deliver because it was the "system's" decision it was an appropriate time to emphasize the Government's authority and determination. He went on to say there had been widespread disgust about the society (grãfina) inclinations, aura of high living, etc. of Costa e Silva and especially of his wife, Dona Yolanda, and that this had gone into the reckoning which resulted in the choice of Medici and his unobtrusive wife.

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TELEGRAM

4. On the subject of "Operation Birdcage", Figueiredo Ferraz said it was further proof, just as the President's declarations about AI-5, that the people in charge were not particularly interested in public opinion or elections. He went so far as to say that not a few in the establishment would like to see MDB do well at the polls, so they could use this result as proof that the Government should be wary and go slowly in the direction of "democratic openings".

5. Figueiredo Ferraz is a brother of Esther Figueiredo Ferraz, Rector of Mackenzie University and mentioned as possible Secretary of Education in the Laudo Natel Government. One hears occasionally that Manoel himself, or his brother, Engineer Jose Carlos, might become Mayor of São Paulo or a Secretary of the State Government. Manoel noted at the outset that his cousin was General João Batista de Oliveira Figueiredo, Chief of the President's Casa Militar (formerly head of São Paulo's Força Publica). He implied we could be certain he knew what he was talking about because of this connection.

SQC  
SAO PAULO 910

1. LATE YESTERDAY CALLED ON GENERAL HELDER TO REESTABLISH CONTACT AND PROPOSE HIS VISIT TO SAO PAULO IN JULY + RECEPTION AND WITH WIFE HELDER...  
 LHM Robert F. Corrigan - vr  
 PUBLIC DEFENSE DON HELDER...  
 ATTACK AS REPORTED PRESS...  
 HOME TODAY BUT FIRST CLASS...  
 CONFRONTING GOVERNOR...  
 ASSUMPTION GOVERNOR...  
 NO APPARENT PENAL OR CLARIFICATION...  
 COUNCIL BISHOP'S EXPLORE...  
 GUILTY AS CHARGED BY GOVERNOR...  
 COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA MACHINE, GYPTO-COMMUNIST, FIDEL CASTRO IN CASSOCK, ETC.), HE WOULD HAVE TO PLACE IN DENIGATING CHURCH HIERARCHY AND SHOULD BE REMOVED. BUT HE SAID THIS IN WAY HE DID NOT CREDIT CHARGES AND TENDING GOVERNOR WAS EXAGGERATED AND SHOULD MAKE RECTIFICATION OF NEXT TIME.

2. DURING CALL EARLIER ON GENERAL PRERATIVE, VIM COMMANDER SECOND INFANTRY DIVISION, GENERAL HELDER HE AGREED ENTIRELY WITH GOVERNOR'S REMARKS CONCERNING DON HELDER. HE SAID HE KNEW DON HELDER WELL FROM TIME HE WAS CHIEF OF STAFF, FOURTH ARMY, AND REGARDED PRERATIVE AS DEMAGOGUE AND PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS IN VIEW HIS...  
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