

Memorandum of Conversation

Date: April 28, 1966

Place: Residence of Sr. Nascimento Brito

Subject: General Costa e Silva and the Presidency

Participants: Manoel Nascimento Brito, Publisher of Jornal do Brasil
Souze e Silva, Chief Editor, Jornal do Brasil
Chargé d'Affaires a. i. - Philip Raine

1. In the course of a lengthy conversation, Brito mentioned that he had been called in by General Costa e Silva who wished to talk about some of the recent editorials in Jornal do Brasil which had called for direct elections and democratic procedures. He said that the General had greeted him at his home with the remark that while he was in military uniform (the meeting took place at the War Minister's official residence) he was in fact running as a civilian candidate and that he was running for the presidency because he was being urged to do so from all over the country and not by any means by the military alone. Brito said that he had been very disappointed with the rest of the two hour conversation because the War Minister's statements were what he described as a jumble of miscellaneous opinions, many of which made good sense enough but which were not necessarily consistent and of one piece. His impression was that these were thoughts or phrases picked up from various people with different view points some of which were intelligent, while others had little relationship to the problems of Brazil today.

2. On the General's economic opinions or program he said that Costa e Silva, in replying to a question he had put, prefaced his remarks with the statement that he knew Brito is a good friend of Roberto Campos and that he wished him to know that many times in cabinet meetings he had approved proposals made by Campos sometimes without necessarily understanding the matter at issue, because he had so much respect for the Minister of Planning. On the other hand, the War Minister went on to say, he felt that he knew Brazil far better than did Campos. He understood for example that Brazil is not really a unified homogeneous country,

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it could be called seven different countries, and that you cannot therefore plan for it globally. The problem is one that would have to be met like a military one, with military tactics, always retaining flexibility. This would be the key of his policy: flexibility.

3. I observed that a number of people had noted many good qualities in the General and it certainly seemed to me that he was a man who was able to get along with people, which conflicted certainly with first reports that the General was a stern, irascible military figure who would accept no one's advice. Brito said that this is precisely what gave him a good deal of concern since apart from the General's Chief of Cabinet, Col. Andreazza who is a very able man, (he was one of the so-called Sorbonne group but broke with it and joined Costa e Silva), such old PSD standbys as Gustavo Capanama, Senator Gilberto Marinho, Senator Mauro Andrade, and other party hacks are closest to him and advise him on political matters. He said this was a poor group to be around a man who claims that he will carry on the March 31 revolution, and that Brazil will make little progress toward modernizing in this sort of a set up. When I observed that my impression of Mauro Andrade was a good one he said that he had been told by the War Minister in the early days of the revolution that Mauro Andrade had urged him, Costa e Silva, to take over the government as a dictator and that he has a tape recording of this conversation. Now, however, Brito said, the War Minister considers him a very fine individual, since he swung the whole ARENA vote to him in the recent party poll.

Comment: Jornal do Brasil's principal directors take a harsh view of the prospects for Brazil under the presidency of the present War Minister on the grounds that a) the March 31 revolution will be set back because the reform aspects of the revolution will be overlooked because of increasing pressures from vested interests, and b) politics as usual since Vargas are likely to return. In point of fact Brazil may prosper better politically with help from some of the old pros than under the present system, often run by inept and sometimes not well chosen lieutenants, which disregards strongly ingrained political traditions not likely to be changed in one or two years.

It is also obvious that Brito and Souza e Silva have lost a good deal of confidence in President Castello Branco because of his inability to stop the War Minister's candidacy. Brito's description of General Costa e Silva's opinions on economic policy followed a protest on my part that his

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(Brito's) view that no important governmental action will henceforth be taken in Brazil without the War Minister's approval was an overstatement. He countered that if that were an overstatement then he would make an understatement (i. e. the War Minister's alleged remarks on economic policy).

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