

ORIGIN/ACTION

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

POL 13-8 BRAZ  
LMB 3-2 BAAZ

# AIRGRAM

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A-20

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: BELEM, BRASILIA, PORTO ALEGRE, SALVADOR, SAO PAULO

RECEIVED  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
MAY 24 10 36 AM '72

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FROM : Amconsul RECIFE

RS/AN  
ANALYSIS BRANCH  
MAY 12 1972

SUBJECT : Rural Unrest in Ceara

REF :

EO25X1 State

The Ceara state office of the federal police has announced the arrest of three rural labor union officials on charges of fomenting subversion among agricultural workers in several localities throughout the state. According to the police report, the leader of the movement is lawyer Lindolfo Cordeiro, juridical assessor for the Federation of Rural Workers in Ceara. Arrested with him were a former president of the rural workers union of Fortaleza and another man also involved in the organization of rural workers. [redacted] that Lindolfo Cordeiro has temporarily been released from jail pending resolution of a decree for preventative imprisonment requested by the federal police.

In describing the tactics employed by the union leaders, the police report states that they started by inciting tenant farmers not to pay their rent, presumably to force landowners to carry out certain improvements in their properties deemed necessary by the workers. Using this situation as a springboard, lawyer Lindolfo Cordeiro would promote meetings of the tenant workers to acquaint them with their legal rights and, according to the police charges, to politicize them and spur them to action, even pointing suggestively to examples of violence. The report states that at one of the meetings, attended by some 400 rural workers, Lindolfo Cordeiro had declared that the land belonged to no one in particular and indicated that consequently violence was justified to abolish private possession of the land.

Rural unrest has occurred in a number of places, and subversive literature was reportedly discovered in the hands of the arrested former president of the rural workers union of Fortaleza. The police report concludes that certain labor leaders were exploiting the ignorance of humble campesinos for ulterior purposes and creating widespread discontent.

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In  Out

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A-20 RECIFE

COMMENT: There is good reason for unhappiness among rural workers in Ceará. The discontent can be explained, however, in terms other than subversion. The level of unemployment and underemployment is extremely high. Drought in many parts of the state has recently further aggravated the plight of rural workers, causing their migration from place to place. There have been reliable reports of incidents brought about by the sheer concentration of uprooted workers escaping drought and seeking livable conditions.

The Consulate General has information indicating that Lindolfo Cordeiro and others are trying in good faith to alleviate bad working conditions for the agricultural worker. The situation, however, is inherently sufficiently critical as to give the authorities serious concern regarding the maintenance of public order. Hence they appear to be taking preventive action under the guise of combating subversion. The federal police report is full of innuendo and far-fetched conclusions. It is at best a dubious statement of the facts, being so obviously biased as to produce an opposite conclusion from that intended. There is little doubt as to the ability of the police to prevent the disruption of public order. For one thing, the workers are unlikely to be allowed to organize to the point of posing an effective threat.



EO25X1 State

DA SILVEIRA

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