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Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Sao Paulo

AmEmbassy Office BRASILIA

July 28, 1967

Some Observations on the 1966 Elections to the Chamber  
of Deputies

1. Overall statistics on the elections to the Federal Chamber of Deputies in November 1966 recently became available from the Superior Electoral Tribunal and are appended as Enclosure 1. Figures on the electorate in the states and territories comprise Enclosure 2.

2. Taken together with other information, these statistics permit some observations which have current and long-run significance. Compared with the comparable election in 1962, the 1966 outcome shows the following picture:

	<u>1962</u>	<u>1966</u>
Electorate	18, 528, 847	22, 407, 950
Voting	79 percent	75.8 percent
Valid votes cast	82.3 percent	84.2 percent
Blank ballots	14.2 percent	10.7 percent
Voided ballots	3.18 percent	5.1 percent

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**Enclosures:**

1. Voting by States
2. Registered Voters

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In general, as can be seen, there is no marked deviation in 1966 from the 1962 pattern. Somewhat more voters showed up at the polls in 1966 and cast a slightly higher percentage of valid votes. Notwithstanding a vociferous campaign in some student and other circles urging voters to vote blank, the figures show that percentagewise there were fewer blank ballots last year than in the previous election to the Chamber. The larger number of voided ballots in 1966 has generally been attributed to the "linked vote" which required voting for a Federal and State Deputy from the same party. A substantial number of voters apparently failed to heed this injunction and thus saw their ballots voided.

3. From these figures it is not evident that the "revolution" of 1964 and the CASTELLO BRANCO Government counted as a major element in the voters' choices. The evidence indicates that except among the most sophisticated voters in the larger cities, local--and predominately municipal rather than even state--issues were uppermost in the voters' minds. A definite link between national issues and the elections cannot be established from the data available. Moreover, it is impossible to detect any "bloc" voting in the country as a whole, such as a "labor vote," a protest vote, or ideologically-oriented voting. What held true for one part of the country was often contradicted by voting elsewhere. For example, the opposition carried the day in the big cities of Guanabara, Sao Paulo, and Porto Alegre, while the government party prevailed in Recife and Belo Horizonte. Similarly, the number of blank and null votes cast in Guanabara was greater than the total number of votes given to ARENA, whereas in Para, the same effect was had on the MDB. The conclusion is pointed to that the individual candidate, old party allegiances, and voting habits were determining in the final analysis, a phenomenon facilitated by the sub-legenda system, which permitted more than one candidate from a party to run for a specific office.

4. The question of how honest or "clean" these elections were will be in dispute for some time. How many candidates were kept off the lists by "cassation" is not an equation that can be solved since there are many unknown variables in it. For example, one could maintain that all the Federal and State Deputies unseated and deprived of their political rights by the "revolution" of 1964 had been prevented from entering the electoral fray in 1966, but this involves factors such as intent, eligibility, and so forth which cannot be established.

5. In the months preceding the election, a number of cassations (removal from office by decree) were carried out for various reasons which can be said to have affected the candidate picture directly. Although no statistics have been published, figures available at the Embassy indicate a total of 31 Deputies (both state and local) who were deprived of their rights in the immediate pre-electoral period. While only six of these were then Federal Deputies, the other 15 must be included in view of the tendency of State Deputies to run for the Chamber at some point. The figure 31, taken as the outside limit of preclusive punitive action, must be measured against the total of more than 1,200 candidates which ARENA and the MDB together were permitted to put up for the election to the Chamber.

6. Again, though there are no reliable figures, the evidence indicates that the federal government's attempts to use the "impugnation" machinery to keep unwanted candidates off the ballot were unsuccessful. To cite some statistics available, in Guanabara the government challenged 11 candidates, mostly from the MDB. The Regional Electoral Tribunal threw out all eleven cases, whereupon the President cassated one of the reprieved candidates who was considered especially obnoxious. In the State of Rio de Janeiro, the Federal Prosecutor sought to impugn 25 candidates; the local electoral court accepted the validity of only one challenge. Preliminary data kept at the Embassy (and subject to correction) show that not more than 10 candidates were successfully challenged by the government throughout the country for the Chamber.

7. There is general agreement among political analysts that somewhat more use was made of the impugnation system in 1966 than in previous election years. An equally important observation, however, is that the "revolutionary" government in virtually all cases accepted the verdicts handed down in impugnation cases by the independent electoral court system. Although the Federal Government lost in most cases, it did succeed in tying up numerous opposition candidates in the courts, thus effectively hindering their campaigns. This, along with the pre-electoral cassations and the prior indirect elections for President and state governors (which the Government made certain it would win) amounted to a subtle, but firm, pressure exerted by the Federal Government on the opposition. Most politicians, and perhaps a good part of the public, felt--whether rightly or wrongly cannot be proven--that the government would not accept defeat, and the result was a dearth of candidate activity during the campaign, and a clear lack of voter enthusiasm.

8. So far as the elections themselves are concerned, reporting from around the country indicates they were probably more honestly conducted than most in the past. Apparently there was little violence associated with the polling to judge from press reports, --and, given the press's known proclivities, these were probably a good barometer in the instance. Though the opposition cried fraud loud and long, in the event negligibly few cases of recount were accepted by the electoral courts. Ballot counting in Bahia was drawn out because of the dearth of electoral judges in the interior of the state--a dilemma finally resolved by bringing the ballot boxes to the capital for examination.

9. There is little doubt that the use of the so-called "individual ballot" contributed to the size of the ARENA victory. In many cases around the country, the MDB could simply not get their own ballots to the voters. This was particularly true in the countryside where ARENA generally won overwhelming majorities. The conclusion to be drawn is that, in the countryside, the party with the best organization and money (in all cases ARENA) was benefited by the individual ballot system.

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