

AIRGRAM XR

EDU 9-3 BRAZ
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ARRA-10

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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : Belo Horizonte, Brasilia, Recife, Salvador, São Paulo

EO : 11652, GDS

FROM : AmConGen RIO DE JANEIRO

TAGS : PINS, PINT, BR

SUBJECT : Student President Arrest Stirs Protest on PUC Campus

REF : Rio's A-294 of 21 December 1972

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
APR 18 3 51 PM '73

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ANALYSIS BRANCO
TE: 21 March 1973

1. The Arrest and Student Reaction

Provoked by the sudden arrest of the student directorate's president, the students at Rio's Pontifical Catholic University (PUC) held two illegal meetings on March 15-16 to determine what measures to adopt to protest the detention. Police arrested Monica Tolipan, president of PUC's principal student government body, on March 14, and are reportedly holding her incommunicado and as yet uncharged.

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When news of her arrest reached the PUC campus, the student leaders of the university's five sub-directorates organized a meeting to inform others of the detention and to discuss ways of insuring that no harm through police action would come to their president. They decided upon three courses of action: (a) alert the university's rector and request his intervention; (b) send a delegation to the CNBB (National Conference of Brazilian Bishops) headquarters to ask for assistance; and (c) call periodic student "assemblies" under the guise of issuing information on Tolipan's condition, but in fact designed to interrupt classes.

2. The Rector Acts

The students carried out their first two objectives by meeting with PUC Rector, Jesuit Pedro Belisario Veloso,

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and CNBB Secretary-General, Dom Ivo Lorscheiter. Both promised to intercede with the authorities on behalf of Miss Tolipan, and both cautioned against further student disorders.

Padre Veloso told PolOff that he met with student leaders soon after their first rally and informed them he would do all in his power to determine the status of the arrested student. At the same time, he forbade them from holding further demonstrations. He explained that such disorders would neither serve the cause of the student president, the student body, nor the university. He reminded them of the harsh terms of Decree Law 477, which controls student activities in the university. On March 20, he again met with the student leadership and reported to them that he had succeeded in getting Rio's Cardinal-Archbishop Sales to ask General Frota, Commander of the First Army, about the student president's welfare, and that Sales was assured that her case would be handled with "complete correctness." The Archbishop was apparently informed also by General Frota that the girl was suspected of having ties with the Partido Comunista do Brasil. This information was related to PUC student leaders by Veloso.

COMMENT

The rapid, determined actions taken by Veloso -- and those taken by Sales at the Rector's request -- have undoubtedly succeeded in calming the situation on PUC's campus for the time being. The students are not likely to act on their third proposal -- to interrupt classes -- unless it becomes known that the authorities are mistreating Miss Tolipan. And it is equally unlikely that the police will mistreat the student president since her detention is so well known in the community.

The incident serves to demonstrate that a small ember of political activism may still be smoldering within the PUC student population, which is composed almost entirely of persons from economically upper-class, well-to-do families. PUC stands in contrast to the other major universities in the area which are government-endowed and attract a lower-income student population that is busily studying to use its university education as an entree into higher economic-social levels. (See reffair.) Even at PUC, however, it is not likely that the ember will be fanned into any dangerous flame. Although there may be some incidents which will arise from the student president's arrest in the future, the situation seems to be very much under control and cooler heads seem to be prevailing on all sides among the students, the rectorate, and the governmental establishment.

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