

# AIRGRAM

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HANDLING INDICATOR

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 Recife, Salvador, São Paulo  
 EO 11652: GDS  
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 DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 APR 30 3 37 PM 1973  
 RS/AN  
 ANALYSIS BRANCH

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FROM : AmConGen RIO DE JANEIRO  
 SUBJECT: Widespread Arrests and Psychophysical Interrogation  
 of Suspected Subversives  
 REF : Rio's A-80, March 21, 1973; Rio's 1310,  
 April 16, 1973

DATE: April 18, 1973

### SUMMARY

Arrests by First Army agents of suspected subversives have increased dramatically during the past several weeks in the Rio area. Mostly university students, the detainees are being subjected to an intensive psychophysical system of duress designed to extract information without doing visible, lasting harm to the body. Those suspected of being hardened terrorists, it is said, are still being submitted to the older methods of physical violence which sometimes cause death. The most plausible reason behind the upsurge of arrests seems to be that efficient police follow-up on information extracted from detentions made earlier this year has produced an ever-expanding number of suspected subversives to be apprehended. Another widely circulated but less logical explanation ties the arrests to the presidential succession decision. Public reaction to the arrests has been mild and subdued thus far, partly because of the belief that any open campaign to expose and criticize the arrests would only make matters worse for those being held and would likely result in other detentions.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 BUREAU OF  
 INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

MAY 3 - 1973

### I. Arrests Increase Dramatically

During the past several weeks, arrests of persons suspected of subversive activities have increased dramatically in the Rio area. An official list of names

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Clearances: DPO:WBMiller

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sent to the military tribunals reveals that 126 persons from the Rio area have been detained, interrogated, and held over pending trial. (Other [redacted] differ with this figure, giving a lower number.) Many other persons, some estimate at least 300, have been taken in for questioning and held for as long as several days before being released. It can be safely concluded that others are also still under detention whose names have not yet been presented to the courts for action. While the largest number of detainees appears to be university students, others, such as journalists, physicians, and university professors have also been picked up and held.

A knowledgeable [redacted] says that the majority of the persons arrested are members or sympathizers of the Partido Comunista do Brasil, the Maoist-oriented Communist party in Brazil. Members of other subversive leftist groups, such as the radical ALN (Aliança Libertadora Nacional), the Castro-ite group RAN (Resistencia Armada Nacional), and the Soviet line PCB (Partido Comunista Brasileiro), have also been caught in the net.

The extensive anti-subversive campaign is being conducted primarily by [redacted]

[redacted] those apprehended are being taken to military prison centers for questioning.

## II. Methods Used to Extract Information

The recent spate of arrests has given rise to numerous reports, several of which Consulate General Rio has been able to substantiate, that the police are using physical and psychological methods to force information out of the suspects. (See Rio's 1310, April 16, 1973, on the Wlacyra Wagner case

[redacted] Though the old forms of torture, such as use of electrical shock devices (the "cattle prod") and tying and hanging the prisoner by his arms and legs from a suspended bar (pau de arara) reportedly have not been abandoned completely, a newer, more sophisticated and elaborate psychophysical duress system is being used to intimidate and terrify the suspect. The ultimate goal of the psychophysical measures, of course, is to extract as much information as possible from the detainee without doing visible, lasting physical harm to his body. The standard pattern of

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treatment, according to persons who have either undergone the series or have talked with persons who have, is as follows:

- 1) The suspect is picked up, usually at gunpoint, and ordered to come with two plainclothes policemen;
- 2) A hood is placed over the detainee's head and he (or she) is forced to lie down in the back of the police vehicle which transports him to the interrogation center;
- 3) The suspect is stripped nude and is made to sit alone in either a completely darkened cell or a refrigerated cell for a period of several hours. This cell is wired with loudspeakers which emit sounds of screaming, sirens, and whistles at high decibel levels;
- 4) The detainee is then interrogated by one or more agents who let it be known what crime the police believe the person has committed and what measures might be used against the person if he is uncooperative;
- 5) At this point, if the suspect does not confess, and if it is believed that he is withholding valuable information, he is subjected to increasingly painful physical and mental duress until he confesses. He is placed nude in a small dark room with a metal floor through which electrical current is pulsed. The shock felt by the individual, though reportedly light in intensity, is constant and eventually becomes almost impossible to withstand. The suspect is usually kept in this room for several hours. He may then be transferred to several other "special effects" rooms in which devices are used to instill fear and physical discomfort. Extreme mental and physical fatigue sometimes results, especially if the person undergoes such treatment for two or three days. All during this time, he is not allowed food or water;
- 6) For a period of at least 10 days, the suspect is held incommunicado; if a person is detained when no witnesses are present, his whereabouts or fate is often unknown by relatives for days or weeks.

Two types of suspects are generally not subjected to the application of the entire pattern given above: (1) those who

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are well-known or prominent in society, having "good connections" inside and outside the government, and (2) those who the police believe are key persons in terrorist networks. The former category is usually treated with care and deference so that there will be little, if any, "repercussion." The second category, the hardened terrorist, is mercilessly "squeezed" it is said, for information through the use of the old, more physically brutal/and violent forms of duress. [redacted] He is sometimes eliminated and his death may be reported in the press several days later as having occurred during a "shoot-out" with the police while he was "attempting to escape." One such case is said to be the death of the university student Lincoln Roque, who the press reported was shot by the police on March 22. [redacted]

Many sources contend that the "shoot-out technique" is being used increasingly by the police not only in Rio but throughout Brazil in order to deal with the public relations aspect of eliminating subversives. This technique is said to have been adopted vis-a-vis hardened terrorists or known radical subversives in order to obviate the death-by-torture charges in the international press. EO25x1

### III. Reaction to the Arrests and Interrogation Methods

The recent round-up has provoked rather minimal public reaction. University students at Rio's Catholic University (PUC) organized two or three "protest meetings" on March 15-17 to consider what action to take following the arrest of the university's student body president, Monica Tolipan. (See Rio's A-80, March 21, 1973.)

On March 26, about 70 medical students of the UFRJ (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro) gathered to protest the detention of their school's leader, Lucia Florentina Valle. Students of PUC and the UFF (Universidade Federal Fluminense, located in nearby Niteroi) issued a declaration on March 29 which announced that they would conduct a "silent protest against arbitrary acts." The UFF student support had been enlisted following the arrest a few days earlier of their student body president, Mauricio Jose Ferreira.

Considerable privately expressed reaction to the arrests has been channelled through the CNBB's (National Council of Brazilian Bishops) Secretary General, Dom Ivo Lorscheiter. According to his staff, Dom Ivo has received "a deluge" of pleas

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from parents, close relatives, and friends of those detained asking him to intercede with the authorities on their behalf. Rio's Cardinal Archbishop Eugenio Sales has likewise been approached by numerous relatives of those arrested during recent weeks. Both the CNBB and Sales have in fact called and sent letters to local military officials to inquire about the welfare of the prisoners. (See Rio's A-80, March 21, 1973.)

There is evidence that these reactions have been successful in moderating the heavy hand of the police in several cases. General Frota, Commander of the First Army, has been responsive and has helped insure that restraint is used by the lower levels [REDACTED] Frota's scope of authority, however, does not appear to include full control over the CODI. As the primary coordinator of counter-insurgency, the chief of CODI is believed to take orders directly from Brasilia. This organizational arrangement has reportedly limited Frota's ability to control CODI or the methods it uses to extract information from suspected terrorists.

#### IV. Two Explanations

The reasons for the apparent upsurge of arrests remain somewhat unclear and therefore have been the subject of considerable speculation by cariocas. One explanation heard is that the increased arrests have resulted naturally from detentions made several months ago. Each suspected subversive "fingered" several others to the extent that the detentions multiplied geometrically. Colonel Adyr Fiuza de Castro, Chief of CODI for the First Army area, seemed to confirm this view recently when he told PolOff that the current high rate of detentions resulted from arrests of a few leaders of subversive groups made last December and January. Information obtained from those arrests implicated others who were detained and who, in turn, implicated still others. He confided also that the authorities have been surprised at the extensiveness of the subversives' network which they have been able to "disarticulate" thus far.

Other knowledgeable Brazilians in Rio dismiss this explanation. Some of the area's leading journalists, newspaper editors, civil rights lawyers, and Catholic Church officials who have discussed the subject with PolOff believe that the increased arrest rate is directly related to the presidential succession issue. Among this group the story is circulating that the arrests have been increased because Brazil is in the critical and sensitive period just prior to the time when the successor to Medici will be named. There is a maneuver among the President's closest

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advisors, the story continues, to make the political tranquility of the country appear uncertain and threatened by subversion to such a degree that President Medici might be prevailed upon to continue for at least one more year (some say two) beyond March 1974. General Fontoura, Chief of SNI (National Intelligence Service), is mentioned most often as the author of this plan, though the Chief of the President's Civil Household, Leitão de Abreu, and his Military Household head, General João Baptista de Oliveira Figureido, and others who are closely associated with Medici, are variously credited with abetting the scheme or originating it. These men, the story spells out, oppose retired General Ernesto Geisel's succession to the presidency, and are playing for more time in which to persuade Medici to change his firm resolve to step down in 1974. Some who relate this story add that Medici is being fed "doctored" intelligence reports which paint an alarming picture of subversive activities in the cities as well as in the countryside. The recent arrests are portrayed as uncovering an elaborate and sophisticated network of subversive cells.

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COMMENT

Although the arrests have created an atmosphere of uneasiness and concern among many circles -- e.g. the university, Church, journalists, etc. -- the public reaction has been mild thus far and is likely to continue to be subdued. Basically, people continue to be interested primarily in economic rather than political developments; along with this, there is a prevailing belief that any strong public manifestation organized to expose and criticize the arrests would only make matters worse for those being held and would likely result in other detentions.

As for the story which links the presidential succession to the round-up of subversives, whether some parts or all of it may have basis in reality remains for the future to reveal. It appears now at least that this "story" is a far-fetched product of the area's hyperactive rumor mill. The view that the arrests have increased because of efficient police follow-up as well as the operation of a multiplier factor seems to be a much more plausible and reasonable explanation.

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A final observation is that the successful use by military investigating agents of psychophysical methods to obtain information from subversive suspects does not seem to have stopped them from applying the traditional forms of physical violence on persons believed to be hardened terrorists.

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