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FROM : AmEmbassy RIO DE JANEIRO

DATE: July 7, 1964

SUBJECT: A Middle-Grade Army Officer's Views on the
Castello Branco Government

REF :

Pol 14 BRAZ

The enclosed memorandum of conversation describes the discontent of Lt. Colonel Francisco Boaventura Cavalcanti, Jr. with the Castello Branco government. Boaventura will be remembered as the army officer who refused to heed orders to participate in the attempted illicit arrest of Carlos Lacerda on October 4, 1963, and who subsequently was punished for this refusal and for having disclosed a good deal of information on the plot against Lacerda. Boaventura was also one of the middle grade officers to participate in the plotting against the Goulart government, and in this context his views on the present government are of interest.

For the Ambassador:

John Keppel
John Keppel
Counselor for
Political Affairs

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS
JUL 14 1964

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8/7/64

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: June 30, 1964

PLACE: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

PARTICIPANTS: Lt. Col. Francisco Boaventura Cavalcanti, Jr. G-3,
1st Airborne Division

Lowell C. Kilday, Second Secretary of Embassy

Colonel Boaventura, in response to my question, stated that the revolution was proceeding "weakly." Asked to clarify this remark, the colonel stated that President Castello Branco had proved himself to be very timid, that he had completely divorced himself from the military forces of the Revolution, and had taken up the reform program of Joao Goulart with the support of the same forces that had supported Goulart.

The colonel said that the president's issuance of a small list (listinha) of Article 10 casualties instead of the promised large list (listao) had sharply disappointed many members of the armed forces. He complained that while the government had eliminated many of the big names from the current scene, such as Juscelino Kubitschek and Janio Quadros, that many more lesser-known persons whose rights should have been suspended or mandates cancelled had remained untouched.

The colonel stated that he was flatly opposed to the government's reform program. He did not object to extension of suffrage rights to the illiterate for municipal elections but seemed to suspect that the government would eventually attempt to obtain suffrage rights for the illiterate in national elections as well, a move which he thought completely unjustified and demagogic.

The agrarian reform proposal's feature of expropriation of property, in the colonel's view, was uneconomic, would reduce production, and was without justification. The colonel stated that he would support a progressive land tax that persuaded land owners to sell off unproductive land, but could not agree with expropriation as a means of achieving land redistribution.

Colonel Boaventura felt that the electoral reform proposal featuring a majority vote requirement in a direct presidential election with recourse to an indirect election in the event no candidate obtains a majority was the worst of the various reforms

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proposed by the government. How, he asked rhetorically, is it possible that the government could even suggest letting the congress have a final voice in a presidential election, particularly a congress dominated by the PSD and PTB. If the government wants a majority requirement, then it should have a second direct election with the two most-voted of the first election as candidates. If that would be too expensive, then the country would have to do without a majority requirement.

The colonel was likewise opposed to the government's proposal concerning eligibility for public office of military personnel. While he agreed that there should be equality for officers and enlisted men he thought it was indispensable to prohibit either from taking part in partisan political activities unless definitely and permanently retired. To ensure that party politics did not enter the barracks he felt strongly that no military person should be allowed to run for office unless he had been retired for at least a year.

Colonel Boaventura went on to say that Castello Branco, though a very reflective and intelligent person, had always been known as very much an individualist. When Castello Branco made a decision, he said, he expected everybody else to recognize that it was a right decision simply because he had made it. The colonel thought that Castello Branco would make a good president in normal times, but in the present situation he felt that somebody like Minister of War Costa e Silva would have been a better choice for president than Castello Branco.

The colonel admitted that Castello Branco's moderate posture had gained Brazil a good deal of support abroad and he stated that he knew the United States, out of a traditional dislike for dictatorships, would have opposed a strong-handed government in Brazil. But, he said, the military did not really want to set up a dictatorship. They had merely wanted an opportunity to cleanse thoroughly Brazilian politics and institutions.

I asked the colonel if the results of the Military Club elections did not show that the bulk of the military officers firmly supported Castello Branco, commenting that the election of General Moniz de Aragao, an officer completely identified with President Castello Branco, and the defeat of another revolutionary hero, General Justino Alves Bastos, had been widely interpreted as an endorsement of the Castello Branco government. Boaventura replied that Moniz de Aragao's victory was the result of his own prestige and a general feeling that Alves Bastos' pre-revolutionary activities had rendered him unfit to head up the Military Club, but had nothing to do with Moniz de Aragao's association with Castello Branco.

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Boaventura stated that Castello Branco's association with the revolutionary movement had been a critical factor in assuring the success of the revolution, that the presence of such a prestigious officer within the scheme had convinced many younger officers to join also. On the other hand, he repeated, it would have been better for the Revolution if somebody other than Castello Branco had been selected to lead the nation following the ouster of Goulart.

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