

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

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R 081115 Z MAY 73

FM AMCONSUL SAO PAULO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4150
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO
AMCONSUL RECIFE
AMCONSUL BELEM
AMCONSUL PORTO ALEGRE
AMCONSUL SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAO PAULO 0985

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: POLITICAL ARRESTS AND TORTURE IN SAO PAULO

REF BRASILIA 2145, RIO DE JANEIRO A-90

1. INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL ARRESTS FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY LAW, EITHER FOR TERRORISM OR OTHER POLITICAL OFFENSES, HAVE BEEN CONSTANT IN SAO PAULO OVER THE PAST YEAR. WHILE THE NUMBER MAY VARY FROM MONTH TO MONTH, THE GENERAL LEVEL HAS REMAINED ABOUT THE SAME AS BEST WE CAN TELL.

2. INTERROGATION OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IS OFTEN ACCOMPANIED BY TORTURE, I. E. THE PARROT'S PERCH, ELECTRIC SHOCKS, STARVATION, ETC. AN MDB CANDIDATE FOR CITY COUNCIL IN SAO PAULO WHO WAS ARRESTED AFTER NOVEMBER MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND HELD FOR SIX WEEKS IN THE MILITARY INTERROGATION CENTER (OBAN) TOLD US AFTER BEING RELEASED THAT ABOUT 60 POLITICAL PRISONERS WERE
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KEPT AT INTERROGATION CENTER, ITS APPROXIMATE CAPACITY, DURING MOST OF HIS TIME THERE. MANY WERE PLAINLY INVOLVED IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES BUT OTHERS APPEARED TO BE ONLY POLITICAL IDEALISTS OPPOSED TO THE REGIME. ALL WERE SUBJECTED TO SOME FORM OF TORTURE. HE HIMSELF WAS NOT ABUSED SINCE AS A LEGITIMATE POLITICIAN AND MAN OF MEANS HE WAS NOT " TORTURABLE".

3. ANOTHER SOURCE, A PROFESSIONAL INFORMER AND INTERROGATOR WORKING FOR THE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE CENTER IN OSASCO (INDUSTRIAL SUBURB OF SAO PAULO,) TOLD US ON APRIL 24 OF HIS OWN " COUNTER- SUBVERSIVE" ACTIVITIES. HE EXPLAINED HOW HE HAD BROKEN A " COMMUNIST" RING INVOLVING A CIVIL POLICE OFFICER. THE OFFICER WAS PERSUADED TO TALK BY ATTACHING ELECTRICAL SHOCK DEVICES TO HIS EARS AND TOLD OF HIS CONNECTION WITH A GIRL FRIEND WHO WAS PROMPTLY PICKED UP. SHE WAS UNCOOPERATIVE, HOWEVER, SO SHE WAS PUT ON THE PARROT' S PERCH FOR 43 HOURS WITHOUT FOOD OR WATER. THIS BROKE HER, OUR SOURCE SAID. TORTURE IN ONE FORM OR ANOTHER WAS COMMON PRACTICE IN INTERROGATION IN OSASCO. HE ALSO GAVE FIRST- HAND ACCOUNT OF KILLING A SUBERSIVE SUSPECT, WHICH HE CALLED " SEWING" THE SUSPECT UP, I. E. SHOOTING HIM FROM HEAD TO TOES WITH AUTOMATIC WEAPON. (FOR DETAILS SEE MEMORANDUM OF THIS CONVERSATION DATED APRIL 26). OVER THE PAST YEAR VARIOUS SECURITY OFFICIALS HAVE CONFIRMED TO US THAT SUSPECTED TERRORISTS ARE KILLED AS MATTER OF STANDARD PRACTICE. WE ESTIMATE PROBABLY AS MANY AS TWELVE HAVE BEEN KILLED IN PAST YEAR IN SAO PAULO AREA.

4. WHILE LEVEL OF POLITICAL ARRESTS AND TORTURE HAS REMAINED MORE OR LESS CONSTANT, THE CONCERN OVER REPRESSION IN SAO PAULO HAS REACHED IN RECENT WEEKS ITS HIGHEST POINT IN YEAR OR SO. FROM TIME TO TIME REPRESSIVE TACTICS OF SECURITY SERVICES AFFECT A PERSON WHO HAS TIES TO THE CHURCH, THE POLITICAL CLASS OR OTHER ELITE GROUPS AND THUS WAKENS INTEREST IN THIS SUBJECT. THIS WAS THE CASE TWO YEARS AGO WHEN THE POLICE ARRESTED A PRIEST AND HIS ASSISTANT AND FIRST BROUGHT CARDINAL ARNS INTO OPEN OPPOSITION TO THE REGIME. IT HAS HAPPENED AGAIN IN RECENT WEEKS IN SAO PAULO WITH THE VANNUCHI CASE. THE DISAPPEARANCE AND DEATH OF VANNUCHI FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL YEARS AROUSED THE STUDENT BODY IN SAO PAULO AND THEY ENLISTED THE ASSISTANCE OF CARDINAL ARNS AND OTHER CATHOLIC LEADERS IN PUBLICIZING HIS DEATH (SAO PAULO' S CONFIDENTIAL

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687 AND 803). THIS CONCERN IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE AND STUDENT LEADERS HAVE BEEN SOLICITING BISHOPS AROUND THE STATE TO ENGAGE IN A SERIES OF MASSES LAMENTING HIS DEATH.

5. CONCERN HAS NOW SPREAD BEYOND CHURCH AND STUDENT CIRCLES AND REAWAKENED WIDER INTEREST IN THE REPRESSION TACTICS OF THE REGIME. FOR EXAMPLE, ROBERTO AND RICARCO CIVITA, OWNERS OF

EDITOR BRIL, BRAZIL'S LARGEST AND MOST INFLUENTIAL PUBLISHING HOUSE, TOLD OUR BPAO LAST WEEK THAT STUDENT UNREST "IS HIGHEST IN OVER TWO YEARS." SECURITY FORCES HAD RAIDED THE UNIVERSITY OF SAO PAULO AND ARRESTED A NUMBER OF STUDENTS. WHEN SUCH OPPRESSION OCCURRED, THERE WERE BOUND TO BE MISTAKES. CARDINAL ARNS WAS VERY CONCERNED AND ROBERTO CIVITA PREDICTED A "MARCH TO END ALL MARCHES" TO LAMENT VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BRAZIL. (COMMENT: THIS IS PROBABLY EXAGGERATED, BUT MANY BISHOPS IN SAO PAULO INTEND TO FOCUS ON THIS ISSUE IN CONNECTION WITH 25 TH ANNIVERSARY THIS YEAR OF UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF RIGHTS OF MAN OF WHICH BRAZIL IS SIGNATORY.) RICARDO CIVITA OBSERVED THAT MILITARY GOVERNMENTS IN PAST HAD RELINQUISHED POWER, BUT THIS ONE HAD ACQUIRED A TASTE FOR KEEPING IT. BOTH CIVITAS EMPHASIZED THAT THEIR EDITORIAL STAFFS WERE DEMORALIZED BECAUSE REGIME PROHIBITED THEM FROM PUBLISHING ANYTHING OF SIGNIFICANCE. ROBERTO SAID HE DREADED DAY WHEN HIS YOUNG SON ASKED "WHAT IS FREEDOM, DADDY?"

4. OTHER SOURCES HAVE ALSO INDICATED TO US INCREASING CONCERN OVER THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN BRAZIL. FORMER PRESIDENT JANIO QUADROS TOLD US RECENTLY THAT HE EXPECTS A PERIOD OF HIGH TENSION OVER THE NEXT 90 DAYS. HE CLAIMS THAT AT LEAST ONE FOUR-STAR GENERAL SHARES THIS VIEW. QUADROS NOTED THAT THIS FEELING HAD ONLY RECENTLY DEVELOPED AND THAT A MONTH BEFORE, HE HAD PREDICTED A SMOOTH PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION AND A TRANQUIL YEAR IN BRAZIL.

5. HENCE WE FIND THAT IN SAO PAULO REPRESSION HAS AGAIN BECOME A LIVE ISSUE WHICH CONCERNS A WIDE NUMBER OF LEADERS WHO ARE UNABLE TO EXPLAIN REPRESSIVE PRACTICES AT A TIME WHEN THE REGIME IS MORE STABLE THAN EVER. WHATEVER THE EXPLANATION, THE FEELING HERE IS THAT THIS ADDS A DISTURBING ELEMENT IN A CLIMATE WHICH COULD BECOME TENSE OVER THE SUCCESSION QUESTION. BUT THE RENEWED INTEREST IN REPRESSION DOES NOT MEAN THAT IN

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SAO PAULO THERE HAS BEEN ANY REAL INCREASE, AND IN FACT THERE MAY HAVE BEEN A SLIGHT DECREASE, IN POLITICAL ARRESTS AND TORTURE.
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