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GDR Department of Foreign Affairs and International Relations, Information on the Situation in Brasil

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Summary:

Louis Carlos Prestes, chairman of the Brazilian Communist Party, briefs the GDR Department of International Relations on events in Brazil following Quadros' resignation and describes the position of the Communist Party of Brazil.

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Confidential!

I n f o r m a t i o n
on the situation in Brazil

On 29.11.1961 a discussion took place with the chairman of the Brazilian Communist Party, Comrade Louis [Luís] Carlos Prestes, attended by Comrade [Peter] Florin, Director of the SED CC Department of International Relations, Comrade [Deputy Foreign Minister Georg] Stibi, and Comrade Rodde.

Regarding the situation in Brazil, Comrade Prestes gave the following assessments: After the resignation of [Jânio] Quadros [on 25 August 1961], Brazil was on the verge of a civil war.

Since 1950, the democratic movement in Brazil has continuously strengthened itself. That is a reflection of the development of capitalism and the growth in numbers of the proletariat. The Brazilian bourgeoisie has since then developed itself sufficiently, that today it feels itself strong enough to wrest concessions from the US-Imperialists.

Already in November 1955, the US-Imperialists attempted to prevent the appointment of [Juscelino] Kubitschek. Since then, there have been many following attempts to bind Brazil more closely to the US and, when possible, to install a military dictatorship. The last attempt took place after the resignation of Quadros.

The Brazilian Communist Party was, during the election campaign of 1960, sure that Quadros was ready to give all positions over to the imperialists. Therefore, the opposition candidate, Marshal [Henrique Teixeira] Lott, was supported.

On 1 January 1961 [sic; Quadros was actually sworn in as Brazilian president on 31 January 1961], Quadros called a reactionary Council of Ministers with fascist forces from the heads of the army, marines, and air force into being. Many democratic officers were ejected from the army and the direction of the economy was completely steered to a reactionary US-dominated course. Brazilian finances came completely under the control of the International Monetary Fund and all control over foreign exchange was lost. Prices rose constantly and the cost of living grew by leaps and bounds. Credit for national industry was stopped and there was an attempt to impose a pay freeze, but this failed. Through this, Quadros attained 1.7 billion dollars of credit and accomplished the cancellation of the interest on the debt.

In foreign policy, contradictions were revealed. On the one side, naval bases were ceded to the US and a military alliance with the US was arranged. On the other hand, four socialist states were diplomatically recognized and Quadros adopted a positive stance towards Cuba. The party opposed Quadros, but supported his progressive measures.

During the presidency of Quadros, contradictions grew in the country. Hardship and crisis grew and this was reflected in the consciousness of the masses. The revolutionary voice also grew in the country and the calls for land reform have never been so great. In practice, the demagogic slogans have struck back against Quadros.

The Fascist leaders of the military were unhappy with his foreign policy. For Quadros, there was only one way out: either begin a fascist course with the military and thus expose himself to the masses, or to give support to the people.

Many false assessments were made of Quadros and even published in Soviet newspapers. He was the prototypical demagogue.

Comrade Prestes emphasized: "The reactionaries attempted keep him in power under all circumstances, and it is not correct that Quadros had to resign under the pressure of US Imperialism. Quite the contrary. The New York Times lamented his resignation."

He gave control to the fascist military officers, who immediately attempted to establish a military dictatorship. This situation resulted in the biggest mass movement since 1930. The Party promoted the slogan of protecting the constitution.

Large political strikes of workers, students, and in the country were led. In this case, the center was in the south of the country. The party organized thousands of resistance groups and in Rio Grande do Sul alone, 300,000 volunteers registered for the defense of the republic. The large political mass movement also had an impact in the Army. The basis of the fight was a manifesto for the defense of the constitution that the Party had drafted and that also carried the signature of Marshal Lott. It accomplished the isolation of the reaction, but the bourgeoisie was clear and strong enough to force through a compromise in the constitution. This compromise is that while Vice President [João] Goulart was made President, a Prime Minister was created. All laws go into effect only after the approval of both the President and the Prime Minister. Also new is that the President can dissolve the Parliament. In principle, the same policies operate as under Quadros. However the Party is attempting to exploit the existing contradictions between Goulart and the government with the goal of changing the government. Thus far, Goulart has yielded to the pressure of the masses. For instance, a 40% wage increase was able to be accomplished through a large strike and there exists complete freedom to strike. Goulart personally supports the trade unions that are under the control of the Communist Party against the union leaders of the US-controlled trade unions that belong to his own party; in October he supported the trade union congress and the peasant congress, both of which were organized under the leadership of the communist party, and openly promised land reform. He restored diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union at a time when new aggression against Cuba is being prepared. Furthermore, the connection of the Communist Party to the President and to the Foreign Minister is good, although the Party is still prohibited by law.

We wish to add that, in the absence of Comrade Prestes at the plenum of the Central Committee of the CP Brazil in October, it was decided to no longer support the policies of Goulart.

That Brazil continues to take a positive position with regards to Cuba is explained by the special role of the bourgeoisie. It is in support of close relations with the US and does not want to break these in the future. On the other hand, it feels itself strong enough to operate its own foreign policy with the goal of expanding its own influence on the other Latin American countries.

The Communist Party, at a plenum in October, has given an assessment of the situation and determined that none of the foundational problems in Brazil have been solved and that it must also join the armed conflict and set it in the right direction. However, there are still possibilities to follow a peaceful path through increasing the power of the masses. However, it is not clear to the Party how far Goulart will go along this path, as he is also the owner of 30,000 heads of cattle.

Presently, the political forces are reorganizing themselves. The masses feel themselves to be the victors, because they have prevented the military dictatorship. However, the standard of living fell further and serious conflicts stand ahead. Radical elements of the bourgeoisie have themselves proclaimed a national liberation front.

The reactionary forces are presently organizing themselves anew. Indeed, Goulart removed the three fascist generals from the high command and replaced them with "less reactionary" [officers]. However, many generals of the coup still remain in key positions.

The situation is very volatile and all objective factors for a change of government are present. However, the reinforcement of the subjective factors is currently deciding.

At the present moment, the movement in the cities is still stronger than in the country, but presently there is also armed conflict in the country in which the peasants are successfully defending their right to work the land.

Regarding the question: "is there a possibility that the bourgeoisie will enact land reform to prevent an explosion?" Comrade Prestes answers: "There is much talk of land reform, however nothing is being done because the upper bourgeoisie is very closely connected to the owners of large estates. More than 12 million peasants are without land, of these approximately 4 million are farm workers. In contrast, 3.8% of the large estate owners own more than 70% of the land. That is the starkest concentration in all of South America.["]

The influence of the Communist Party is constantly growing. For example, this is

shown by an official, 49-colleague-strong delegation of the trade unions traveling to the 5th World Trade Union Congress.

The Party has, together with Goulart's worker party, control of the trade unions. The influence over the countryside also grows. The manifestation of this was the first Peasant Congress, which was prepared by corresponding conferences in all states under control of the Party.

Additionally, large groups of Catholic intellectuals support the Party and a division is evident even in the high clergy.

With the new line of March 1958, the party grows continuously. It fights to double its membership. In practice, the Party is legal. The local party groups are officially recognized. Currently, the Party leads the fight for full juridical legality and fights for the possibility to participate in the election. The Party believes that presently the situation looks very favorable for this.

Comrade Prestes explained further, that the Party is unified and stands strong behind the Central Committee, which was elected from the 5th Party Congress. However, there is one member of the last Central Committee that seeks to develop a splinter group. This is why at the last plenum 3 candidates from the Central Committee were ejected from the Central Committee. Others, for instance Amasonas, must also possibly be ejected from the Party. Until now, each fraction conflict has been inconclusive.

The Party is also making great efforts to educate [Brazilian writer] Jorge Amado and to keep him in the Party. He did not understand the 20th [Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)] Party Congress [in 1956] and has behaved in an undisciplined manner. The reaction seeks to bring him to their side. He wishes to show the intellectuals that he is an "independent" communist personality. The basic organization has made a request to eject him from the Party. The CP Brazil asks that any new books by Amado not be translated. The last two no longer have any merit. The Party will recommend other new writers to us, with whom we can collaborate.

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27 x Politburo

3 x Dept. of Foreign Policy and International Relations