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### Summary

Two months before election day, Senator Walfredo Gurgel appears to hold a slight edge over Senator Dinarte Mariz in the race for Governor of Rio Grande do Norte. Meanwhile, Agnelo Alves appears well ahead of Pedro Lucena in the contest for Mayor of Natal. The electoral contest for Governor is a rough and tumultuous one, with both sides putting every effort into the campaign. The outcome, however, has relatively little national importance.

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### Background

On October 3, the State of Rio Grande do Norte will elect a new governor to replace Alufzio ALVES, and the capital city of Natal will elect a new mayor to replace Admiral Tertius REBELLO. This week ConGen officers visited the state to get a feel of the campaign.

The campaign for governor finds opposed two slates representing the two principal political coalitions of the state. On the one hand, the

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administration of Aluizio Alves seeks to perpetuate its control of the state. Governor Alves was elected in 1960 as a reform candidate, pledged to bring new vigor and development to the state after the tired, do-nothing, and corruption-ridden administration of UDN Governor Dinarte MARIZ. Although Alves was himself linked with the UDN, he broke away from it and formed a coalition and personal machine---principally of the PSD and PTB---which he called the Cruzada de Esperança. Young, dynamic, and an excellent orator, he contrasted sharply with the older, traditional politicians of the state.

One in power Aluizio launched an extensive program of highly publicized projects and public works throughout the state. The energy and drive of his administration made itself felt among the public to an extent unparalleled in a state used to conservative, traditional politics. Aluizio preserved good relations with the Goulart Federal Regime, and sought to obtain aid from it; he was not, however, tinged with accusations of personal Communist affinities. He was one of the first governors in the Northeast to become involved in American aid projects, particularly in school construction and public housing; this aid he publicized widely as proof of his progressive administration, though at the same time he did not fail to criticize American aid publicly when he felt like it. Despite the reformist platform of his administration, he is generally believed to have used his position to feather his personal nest and that of his family, and following the Revolution of March 31 he was one of the Governors whose ouster was considered likely.

The opposition in Rio Grande do Norte is headed by former Governor, and now Senator, Dinarte Mariz whose strength is based largely on the traditional political chiefs of the towns of interior and western Rio Grande do Norte, and in Mossoró, the state's second city. Aside from Dinarte Mariz, the principal backer of his political organization is the numerically numbered Rosado family, who have been prominent in Rio Grande do Norte politics for many years. They are currently represented by Senator Dix-Huit ROSADO and Federal Deputy Vingt ROSADO. Mariz's administration closed under heavy clouds of corruption and inefficiency, though there are those who believe him personally honest. As a UDN Senator he has been conservative, and an enthusiastic backer of the Revolution, and has waged a steady campaign of unusually vitriolic abuse against Aluizio Alves and all his works.

When this year's campaign started, Governor Alves had unusual difficulty in finding a candidate who could lead his Cruzada to victory without supplanting his own personal control of the machine he had built up. His first difficulty was the gubernatorial ambition of Vice-Governor Theodóric BEZERRA, state chairman of the PSD, who saw in the 1965 campaign his only and last chance to rise to power. An old-fashioned conservative politician, Theodóric had launched his campaign publicly long before the Revolution; it was generally conceded however that he had neither the votes nor the personality necessary to win.

The beginning of the campaign was marked by deperate efforts by Governor Alves to prevent Bezerra from inheriting the Cruzada mantle to which the latter believed he was entitled. To this end, a wide variety of trial balloons were sent up, mostly with the purpose of keeping the field open until Alves could pick his man. Then the Governor made a major effort to entice into his fold,

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as standard bearer, the Mayor of Mossoró, Raimundo SOARES. Soares was closely linked to the Dinarte Mariz - Rosado Family machine which rules his part of the state, but he had preserved good working relations between his Municipal administration and the State Government and refused to be an errand boy for the Rosados. After much public wavering on the part of Soares the plan fell through, leaving Alves rather embarrassed and without a candidate, and Soares at odds with some of the more faithful Dinarte supporters who felt his faith had faltered.

Alufzio finally picked his candidate, in the form of Senator Monsenhor Walfredo GURGEL, an experienced if not very colorful PSD politician-priest. Clearly, Alufzio looks to Gurgel to keep the gubernatorial seat warm without detracting from his own power; there are some who think Gurgel may have other ideas in the back of his mind. Alufzio, who will run for the Senate in 1966, presumably hopes to return to the Palácio de Esperança (as he has re-named the former Palácio Potengi) the next time round. This settled, Alufzio turned to the problem of maintaining the Cruzada coalition, and picked Federal Deputy Clovis MOTA, chairman of the State PTB and a moderate but open opponent of the 1964 Revolution, as Gurgel's running mate. Theodórico Bezerra was "induced" to renounce his own candidacy; rumors as to the price are various ---among them being a cash payment of Cr\$ 100,000,000 and a promise of the contract to run Natal's new (and only) modern hotel.

The opposition's choice was less difficult. Dinarte Mariz has never concealed his intention to return to power, and he chose as his running mate (once Raimundo Soares had injured his image among the UDN faithful) suplente Federal Deputy Tarcisio MAIA, brother of Paraíba's Senator and gubernatorial candidate João AGRIPINO MAIA FILHO. Under the rubric Oposições Unidas they seek to repeat Rio Grande do Norte's tradition of always ousting the situacionistas in state elections.

A third force has established at least a potential existence in the state. Led by Federal Deputy Odilon RIBEIRO COUTINHO (PDC), from a noted Paraíba political family, it reportedly includes Raimundo SOARES and the influential journalist (and Alufzio's one-time education secretary) Calazans FERNANDES. Its role in the election is not yet announced, though Dinarte supporters hope for its endorsement.

#### The Campaign

The campaign to date has been a rough one. Both sides have concentrated on holding mass rallies (comícios) to whip up enthusiasm among their supporters, and both sides have also sought to break up or shout down the meetings of their opponents. The result has been considerable scuffling, rock throwing, and fist-fighting in many places, though electoral violence has not, at least as yet, got to the lethal stage.

Each side has a newspaper and a radio station, which are devoting their full energies to the campaign. The population is encouraged to publicize its convictions; in the Natal area most buildings display small flags; green

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for the Cruzada and Gurgel or red for Dinarte. In Natal itself the proportion is about 80% green or more; in the interior it appears more evenly mixed (we have not observed Dinarte's Mossoró stronghold).

So far as issues are concerned, the campaign has not so far proved very enlightening. Aluizio (and in everyone's mind this is a mere stand-in) is running on his record of administrative achievement and public works, and both sides are vigorously accusing each other of crime and corruption. The Cruzada, dubbing its candidate "O Monsenhor", contrasts him to Dinarte "O Fechador" (the closer-down), and all new buildings and projects (including those sponsored by USAID) are festooned with green banners advertising "Esta Obra Não Vai Fechar." Gurgel's status as a priest has been used freely by both sides; the Cruzada openly suggests that its man has celestial as well as mundane backing, and the opposition hints that if elected Gurgel will be forced to step down by the Vatican.

The mutual charges of corruption made by Aluizio and Dinarte seem unlikely to prove especially effective. The "uncommitted voter", if he is concerned with the subject at all, has little faith in either from this point of view and Gurgel's dependent status makes his own personal morals irrelevant. Gurgel's possibilities for success are based on the material achievements of the Aluizio administration, and on the pressures and inducements which a state government in power can provide in behalf of its candidate. Dinarte, aside from the votes controlled by politicians favorable to him, stands to gain from the normal tendency of voters to want a change, and from the feeling that he, at least, is a real candidate and not a puppet.

The strife within the Cruzada, too, has not strengthened it. Vice-Governor Theodórico Bezerra has abandoned his candidacy and formally endorsed Gurgel; he can hardly be expected to be happy about it, regardless of the inducement used. It is reported that he is effectively sitting on his hands and allowing his clientele to vote as it likes. Another reported semi-defector is State Deputy and government leader Roberto VARELA, who has close links with Bezerra and hoped to obtain a place on the Cruzada ticket for himself. It is also reported that two public relations experts, who had developed Aluizio's rather effective publicity system, have deserted to the Dinarte camp.

### Prospects

The strength of the Cruzada is centered in Natal, while that of Dinarte is in Mossoró and the west. Barring a landslide, therefore, Gurgel must come out of Natal with a lead sufficient to overcome Dinarte's expected margin in the west. (Natal has roughly 76,000 electors out of the state's 200,000.) One knowledgeable observer has suggested that a 15% lead would be sufficient.

A very recent straw poll among some 5,000 residents of different parts of Natal, conducted by the non-committed Diários Associados newspaper chain, suggests that Gurgel will indeed get his 15% margin. This poll gives Gurgel some 57% of the Natal vote to 36% for Dinarte, with 3% blank and 3% void.

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The poll showed Gurgel with a smashing lead in Natal's slum areas and among state employees, and with a moderate lead in other areas, while Dinarte had a very slight edge in polls taken in banks and among municipal and federal employees. The Government's candidate for Vice-Governor, Clovis Mota, ran about the same but with about twice as many blank votes.

On the basis of this poll, and the views of observers, it seems probable at this time that Walfredo Gurgel will be elected Governor by a fairly narrow margin.

#### The Mayoralty Race in Natal

Public interest in the race for Mayor of Natal is considerably less than in that for Governor. Natal's last elected mayor was Djalma MARANHÃO, an extreme leftist who combined a dynamic and popular developmental program with Communist infiltration and agitation. Ousted and exiled by the Revolution in April 1964, Maranhão was replaced by Admiral Tertius REBELLO.

Rebello has tried hard to clean up the city administration, and to run an efficient government, but he has been hampered by lack of the Federal assistance which has been showered on Maranhão. As a result he has been frustrated and unhappy, and has complained bitterly both to the press and to President Castello Branco about his position; he has shown no desire to remain in politics. His principal achievement has been a planned reform of administrative procedures, financed by USAID.

The opposing factions in the city election are the same as at the state level. The Cruzada's standard bearer for mayor is none other than Agnelo ALVES, brother to Alufizio. Agnelo, a journalist, has been acting as Chief of the Civil Household of the Governor and as Director of the state-run Foundation for Popular Housing (FUNDHAP). His running mate is perhaps more interesting; he is Ernani SILVEIRA, who was Secretary for Planning in the Maranhão administration. The opposition slate consists of two State Deputies, Pedro LUCENA and Dari DANTAS.

Alufizio's power is centered in Natal, and the Diários Associados poll shows brother Agnelo leading Lucena by 49% to 37%. As of now, the outcome seems assured.

#### Comment

The election in Rio Grande do Norte is easily the most animated of any in the Northeast this year, with both sides fighting hard with all the weapons at their disposal. Although both Cruzada candidates have running-mates associated with the ancien regime, the Revolution has not so far become an issue of the campaign. None of the candidates, for Governor or Mayor, seem likely to provide the dynamic, progressive leadership which the Northeast so badly needs; indeed, the next state and municipal administrations seem

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likely to be dull in comparison with the fireworks which have marked the rule of Aluizio and Djalma. The influence of Rio Grande do Norte on national affairs is minuscule, and the current race seems more significant for its current tumult than for the implications of its outcome.

*Hyman Bloom*

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