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ACTION ARA 16

INFO CIAE 00, DODE 00, JPM 04, H 02, INR 07, L 03, NSAE 00, NSC 10, P 04,

RSC 01, SP 02, SS 20, USIA 12, AID 28, RSR 01, /110 W

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R 242115 FEB 69

FM AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7041

INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMCONSUL RECIFE

RRUESUP/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 2589

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SUBJECT: BISHOPS' DECLARATION ON POLITICAL SITUATION

REF: RIO A-88

1. PRESIDENT COSTA E SILVA RECEIVED FEB 21 DECLARATION MADE BY CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF BISHOPS AT MEETING LAST WEEK IN SAO PAULO. DOCUMENT OFFERS "LOYAL COLLABORATION" TO GOVERNMENT AND TO "ALL SECTORS WHICH SINCERELY SEEK TRUTH, JUSTICE, LIBERTY, AND LOVE." NO RESPONSE AS YET FROM GOVERNMENT.

2. DECLARATION DESCRIBES IT AS MAKING POSSIBLE ARBITRARY ACTIONS, INCLUDING "VIOLATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS." ALSO "IN PRINCIPLE MAKES VERY DIFFICULT AUTHENTIC DIALOGUE BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND GOVERNED" AND COULD LEAD MANY TO DANGEROUS CLANDESTINE ACTION. BISHOPS STATE THAT "OUR ARDENT DESIRE... IS REDEMOCRATIZATION OF REGIME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE".

3. HOWEVER, BISHOPS ALSO EXPRESS HOPE THAT GOVERNMENT WILL USE ITS CURRENT EXCEPTIONAL POWERS TO IMPLEMENT SOON REFORMS WHICH "GOVERNMENT ITSELF HAS REAFFIRMED." DOCUMENT DECLARES THAT REFORMS, WHICH NOT SPECIFIED, ARE NOT SUBVERSION OF ORDER BUT MODIFICATION OF ARCHAIC STRUCTURES.

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4. DISCUSSING CONCERN OF CHURCH WITH REFORM, IT CONTINUES "WE LAMENT PROFOUND WRONG INTERPRETATIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF THE CHURCH, EVEN THOUGH THERE MAY HAVE BEEN IMPRUDENT ACTS, WHICH WE EQUALLY REGRET." AFFIRMS THAT BISHOPS AGAINST SUBVERSION, THAT IS, THOSE WHO SEEK SOCIAL UPHEAVAL TRYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ANARCHY TO IMPOSE THE INTERESTS OF A GROUP, "AS WELL AS THOSE WHO ABUSE ECONOMIC OR POLITICAL POWER FOR THEIR OWN BENEFIT." DOCUMENT REAFFIRMS DEDICATION TO TEACHINGS OF VATICAN II, MEDELLIN, AND THE SOCIAL ENCYCLICALS "EVEN THOUGH THIS MAY COST US BITTERNESS AND PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES."

5. DOCUMENT SIGNED BY ALL OFFICERS OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE INCLUDING PRESIDENT CARDINAL ROSSI OF SAO PAULO, DOM HELDER CAMARA, AND DOM EUGENIO SALES OF SALVADOR. DECLARATION DELIVERED TO PRESIDENT IN NAME OF CARDINAL ROSSI BY CARDINAL BARROS CAMARA OF RIO AND CNBB SECRETARY GENERAL LORSCHIEDER. ROSSI RELEASED NOTE SAYING THAT PRIME OBJECTIVE DECLARATION TO MANIFEST "CONCERN, HOPE, AND COLLABORATION" OF CHURCH.

6. COMMENT: AS REPORTED REPAIR CHURCH LEADERS TRYING AVOID CONFLICT WITH GOB. PRESENT DOCUMENT SHOULD HELP CONTAIN LIBERAL ELEMENTS OF CHURCH WITHOUT PROVOKING AUTHORITIES. AIRGRAM FOLLOWS.

BELTON

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