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HANDLING INDICATOR

TO : Department of State

INFO : Belem, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba, Porto Alegre, Recife
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RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
NOV 15 1 10 PM 1967

FROM : AmEmbassy Office Brasilia

DATE: November 14, 1967

RS/AN
ANALYSIS BRANCH
BN

SUBJECT : Catholic Clergymen's Statements Point Up Ferment in Church

REF : Brasilia 1347

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS

SUMMARY

Two recently-published declarations of various Brazilian Catholic clergymen strongly criticized the Church and the industrialized nations for their socio-economic policies. One, signed by numerous Brazilian priests, centered on problems in Brazil and deplored the Church's reluctance to participate in the fight for economic development and the betterment of the lot of the masses. The other, a declaration of seventeen Bishops of the "third world," eight of whom are Brazilians, expanded into the international sector and inter alia attacked the "imperialism" of the developed nations and criticized the Church's connection to international finance. The two declarations evidence divisions of opinion within the Brazilian clergy on Church policies. The non-conformist, sometimes radical, views of these progressive churchmen also re-inforce the positions of other opposition elements in Brazil.

NOV 20 1967

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Enclosure: List of Signatories of Bishops' Declaration

[Handwritten signature]

GROUP 4 - Downgraded at 3-year intervals.
Declassified 12 years after date of origin.

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

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In Out

Drafted by: POL/ECON:MLevitsky:mjm:11-14-67

Contents and Classification Approved by: *[Signature]* Herbert S. Okun

Clearances:

Action: ACA/BR-NAN-File

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Authority 110096900

1. Two recently-published declarations, signed by various Brazilian Catholic clergymen last August, strongly criticized both the Church and the industrialized nations for their socio-economic policies regarding the underdeveloped countries. The first, which focused mainly on Brazilian problems, was published by Ultima Hora on October 24 in the form of a letter from "over 300" priests to all Brazilian Bishops (reftel). The second appeared in the October 29 press as a declaration signed by seventeen Bishops from underdeveloped nations, including eight Brazilians, and contained a broader critique reaching into the international sector.

2. The Priests' Declaration. After stating their intention to inform the Bishops of their apprehensions about the Church's role in Brazil, the priests set forth what they considered to be the present situation of the Brazilian people. Under the headings "A People Assassinated" and "A People Robbed," they pointed to the high rate of infant mortality, the low nutritional level, the increasing cost of living coupled with low wages, and small governmental expenditures for educational and health programs, contrasted with the large allocations for the military. Referring to an allegedly widening gap between the rich and poor nations, the priests criticized United States aid policy since 1959 for having obligated the aided countries to buy manufactured products from American firms. In their outspoken criticism of the Church, they asserted that the institution's present policies condoned the "brutal exploitation" of the people and that it was tied to the economically powerful classes. They also criticized the training of priests as isolating them from society. This isolation allegedly increased the priests' tendency to accept "violence, oppression, the climate of war, in short, national feudalism and capitalism." The Bishops were criticized in this regard for hindering free expression and for following the authorities of Rome [sic] without regard to the realities of the Brazilian situation. To correct these alleged ills, the priests called for greater Church awareness of the problems of the laboring and student classes; a more active Church role in pointing out the evils of unjust salaries, exploitation of the people and the suppression of liberty; closer identification with the common people and a dissociation of the Church from the economic and political elites; greater freedom and responsibilities for priests; and revitalization and expansion of the priesthood through the ordination of married men.

3. On the basis of reports from the Consulates, it appears that the declaration had its origins and main support among priests in the states of Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais. The document was also apparently circulated to priests in other areas of Brazil for comment and signature.

Some priests in Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná who did not have the opportunity to sign the document, have since issued similar statements, but numerous others reportedly refused to go along with the highly polemical criticism of Church policies.

4. Reaction from higher Church prelates was surprisingly mild. Most of the Bishops who expressed an opinion felt that the priests' declaration was sincere and warranted study, but pointed out certain errors and ambiguities in it. Some lamented the lack of communication within the Brazilian Church, noting that the declaration was released to the press before being sent to the Bishops themselves. Others observed that there were over 12,000 priests in Brazil who did not subscribe to the statement's views and dismissed it as unimportant.

5. The Bishops' Declaration. The declaration of seventeen Bishops of the "third world" (see enclosure for list of signatories) called for the liberation of the underdeveloped nations from the influence of the great powers and heavily criticized the "imperialism of money" to which it said the Church was bound. Quoting freely from Populorum Progressio and other papal encyclicals, the statement attacked the social effects of capitalism and its "morality of profits" and advocated a true socialism based on a just division of wealth and the fundamental equality of all. The Bishops belittled economic assistance from the industrialized nations, claiming that those nations were becoming even richer through the operation of the present international economic system. The Church, they declared, had to free itself from servitude to international finance, and its clergymen were obligated to protect their nations from exploitation by foreigners interested only in transferring national wealth abroad. The Bishops supported the idea of "world government" and ended their declaration with a strong defense of the rights of labor.

6. The exact place and circumstances of the document's drafting are unclear at this point. Most of the foreign Bishops appear to be French or Dutch. The Brazilian signatories of the declaration can be identified with the progressive-radical wing of the clergy. They included the controversial Archbishop of Recife, Dom HELDER Camara, the Bishop of Cratêus in Ceará, Dom Antonio FRAGOSO (who celebrated a mass for Che GUEVARA shortly after his death) and the Bishop of Santos, Dom David PICAIO (who fully supported the priests' statement upon its release). The fact that the declaration was based on prior papal statements has probably been responsible for the almost complete lack of unfavorable public Church

reaction to it in Brazil. Several other Brazilian Bishops have come out in support of the ideas expressed in the document since its publication. It has been heavily criticized, however, by the moderate press: both Jornal do Brasil and Estado de S. Paulo found the declaration lacking in its historical analysis and censured the signatories for their overly simplistic ideas and failure to suggest solutions for the problems denoted.

Comment

7. The documents, similar in tone and orientation, reveal a generalized frustration which probably reflects the contrast between the progressive statements emanating from the Vatican and the conservative positions of much of the Brazilian hierarchy. Current centrifugal tendencies within the Church, combined with an evident lack of education and sophistication in the lower ranks of the clergy, add to the ability of maverick clergymen like Dom Helder to open wider divisions of opinion regarding Church policies. To the extent that these opinions polarize, the likelihood of rational discussion and eventual compromise is decreased. Considering the traditional importance of the Church in Brazil, the current internal debate also has political significance which transcends its immediate confines. The non-conformist views of progressive Church elements have the effect of reinforcing and legitimizing the positions of professional politicians and others who advocate radical changes in domestic and foreign policies.

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List of Signatories of the Bishops' Declaration

Brazilian

1. Helder Camara, Archbishop of Recife
2. João Batista da Motta e Albuquerque, Archbishop of Vitoria
3. Luiz Gonzaga Fernandes, Auxiliary Bishop of Vitoria
4. Severino Mariano de Aguiar, Bishop of Pesqueira, Pernambuco
5. Francisco de Mesquita, Bishop of Afogados de Igazeira, Pernambuco
6. Manuel Pereira da Costa, Bishop of Campina Grande, Paraiba
7. Antonio Batista Fragoso, Bishop of São Crateus, Ceara
8. David Picão, Bishop of Santos, São Paulo

Foreign

9. Georges Mercier, Bishop of Laghouat, Algeria
10. Michel Darmancier, Bishop of Walle and Futuna, Oceania
11. Amand Hubert, Apostolic Vicar of Heliopolis, Egypt
12. Argel Unibert, Apostolic Vicar of Florencia, Colombia
13. Frank Franic, Bishop of Split, Yugoslavia
14. Gregorio Haddad, Auxiliary Bishop of Beirut, Lebanon
15. Carlo Van Melckbeke, Bishop of Ning Hsia, China
16. Etienne Loosdregt, Bishop of Vientiene, Laos
17. Jac Grent, Bishop of Tual, Maluku, Indonesia

Source: O Estado de S. Paulo, October 29, 1967

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