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TO : Department of State  
 INFO: RIO de JANEIRO, BRASILIA

RECEIVED  
 DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 MAR 12 10 57 AM 1969  
 SRS/AN  
 ANALYSIS BRANCH

HANDLING INDICATOR

Pol 15-7 Braz

BR

FROM : Amconsul São Paulo

DATE: February 28, 1969

SUBJECT : Bishops' Declaration on Political Situation; Views of  
 Cardinal Archbishop Dom Agnelo Rossi

REF : Rio's 1388 and São Paulo's 157

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 BUREAU OF  
 INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
 MAR 14 1969

Enclosed is a memorandum of conversation with Dom Agnelo Rossi, Cardinal Archbishop of São Paulo and President of National Conference of Bishops, in which he gives interesting information on the declaration presented to President Costa e Silva by the Central Committee, which met in São Paulo February 17-19. The Cardinal also gives his own views on the attitude which the Church should adopt in the present political situation, making clear his concern over "arbitrary" actions by the GOB under IA-5. He left no doubt that he favored an active political role for the Church, in an effort to influence future events in Brazil and to encourage meaningful reforms.

COMMENT: It is difficult to perceive and troubling to contemplate what may be the eventual result of this "confrontation" in this country often called "the largest Catholic nation in the world." This appellation has been termed "mythical" by many observers who point out that the state of the faith in Brazil is poor indeed and that the great bulk of "Catholics", on the masculine side at least, are so in name only. In any case more than a few of the more affluent and influential Catholics are increasingly concerned by the lack of harmony between Church and Government. They are particularly concerned by a tendency on the part of the hierarchy to intrude in the economic and political spheres and by such acts as publicly criticizing the Government. And they are disgusted and even angered when prelates impugn the capitalistic system and free enterprise and in effect preach something akin to revolution to achieve a "new order."

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GROUP 4

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FORM 4-62 DS-323

Drafted by: *WLV*  
EXEC:WLVight, Jr. :PO:RFCorrigan:djg

Contents and Classification Approved by:

Clearances: 2-28-69

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Editorially, middle-of-the-road and responsible "O Estado de São Paulo," certainly no particular friend of the present military regime, has for some time been taking the Brazilian Church to task. The newspaper has referred to the Pope's own recent famous allusion to the Church's possibly following a path of "self-destruction;" and it has pointed out that the "Nova Igreja" in Brazil, if it fails to check its impulses to involve itself mischievously in the political and economic spheres (pointing out it is grossly unprepared in the latter), it will surely help the process of the Church's demise.

Similarly, the February 27 issue of "O Estado" carries an article by a well-known Catholic writer and commentator, Gustavo Corção, criticizing the Bishops' latest declaration. Corção found the latter "vague and unjust" and noted that more than half the signatories "are Bishops and Archbishops who collaborated closely with the two malevolent governments (Goulart's and Kubitchek's) which ruined Brazil and delivered the Brazilian family to atheistic and inhuman Communism." Corção admitted that the present exceptional regime brought "inconveniences," as the prelates complained, but he compared such inconveniences favorably with those suffered by the people under previous baleful governments. He asserted that while the remedy was "bitter," it was nonetheless a remedy, unrecognized as such only by those who forgot history or desired a return of anarchy.

CORRIGAN

R JL

Enclosure:

MemCon dated February 20, 1969

Embassy Comment

Cardinal Rossi's remarks are of great interest and relevance. They confirm reports from the Embassy and other posts concerning the sentiments of Brazil's leading Churchmen toward the Government and the political situation flowing from IA-5. They also clearly underline that the Church remains committed to social and economic reforms and the adoption of an active political role if necessary to induce the

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Embassy Comment (continued)

Government to follow through on its promises. Though not directly connected to what Cardinal Rossi had to say, the "O Estado de São Paulo" editorial on the Church comes as no surprise as the newspaper has long inveighed against "red" prelates. Its views are fairly representative of the conservative wing of Brazilian Catholicism. What Gustavo Corção had to say represents a minority viewpoint, considering his reputation as a right-wing extremist. He last came to national attention for his anti-Semitism in January, 1969 (see Rio de Janeiro 337).



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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Page 1 of 5  
Encl. No. 1  
A-24 from São Paulo

Date: February 20, 1969

SUBJECT: Views of Cardinal Archbishop Rossi, and Meeting of  
Central Committee National Council Brazilian Bishops

PARTICIPANTS: Cardinal Archbishop Dom Agnelo Rossi

William L. Wight, Jr., Deputy Principal Officer, Amconsul  
São Paulo

John D. Blacken, Political Officer, Amconsul São Paulo

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ConGen officers called on the Cardinal to ascertain his views on IA-5 and on what had transpired at the closely-held meeting of the Central Committee of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops in São Paulo on February 17-19. The Cardinal, in a friendly and talkative mood, spoke on the following:

1. Meeting of Central Committee National Council Brazilian Bishops.

The group of Bishops, he said, had reached basic agreement on the issues and had obtained a consensus after much discussion. Dom Agnelo Rossi made clear he favored a middle-of-the-road position and that he worked hard against extremists on either end of the spectrum within the Church. He emphasized that he disagreed completely with certain attitudes expressed by Dom Helder Camara. In his view, Dom Helder's statements provoked the GOB and represented unjustified and inappropriate criticism of capitalism, of U.S. foreign policy, etc. He had told Dom Helder that he strongly disapproved of his position, and of some of his actions. Dom Agnelo recognized, of course, that the Northeast was a different world from São Paulo. At the same time, he did not agree with the right-wing conservatives in the Church, some of whom sought to curry favor with the Brazilian military and supported the "hard-line" one-hundred-percent. Dom Agnelo asserted that the statement worked out for presentation to President Costa e Silva was a carefully-drafted and moderate one which avoided provocative language. Yet, he said, "the GOB won't like it." The Bishops had attempted to take a constructive attitude, to avoid harsh criticism, and to view the future with hopefulness. The message

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Drafted by: <sup>WLV</sup> EXEC:WLWight, Jr./dks  
February 26, 1969

RJC

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expressed the Church's over-all optimism and offered its collaboration in carrying out necessary and meaningful reforms. Dom Agnelo seemed quite pleased with the Bishops' work and appeared confident that U.S. Government authorities would also find the message an excellent one with which we could agree. He told ConGen officers the note would be published on Sunday, February 23 (On February 22 Dom Agnelo issued a press release saying the message would not be made public; however, it appeared in full in newspapers of February 25).

Some Bishops, he said, had argued for a stronger statement by the Church condemning the government for IA-5 and the events thereafter. However, he had opposed this, since he felt it would do no good; it would only exacerbate the situation and eliminate what chance the Church had to influence the GOB in the direction of moderation. Speaking of IA-5, he said, "we are afraid of arbitrary acts and we know of capricious and unfounded actions already carried out under IA-5." At the same time he recognized some justification for IA-5 in the necessity for the GOB to act against corrupt individuals and dishonest politicians. Many of them, he thought, deserved to be cassated. "Many officials are corrupt and the lack of morality of many prominent Brazilians is shocking." In Dom Agnelo's view, the Church had to raise a warning to the GOB against going too far on the road of repression. At the same time the message to President Costa e Silva was designed to encourage the GOB to carry out meaningful and necessary reforms. The Church should influence the GOB, insofar as possible, toward moderation and democracy. The Church's position should be a balanced one, speaking out when necessary, but tactfully and carefully in order not to exacerbate feelings of the military.

## 2. Position of the Catholic Church.

He said the Church must be independent. "The government does not owe us anything and neither do we have any special relationship to the government." "We must be free to speak out, and must preserve our freedom of action." He said the politicians and businessmen were afraid to say anything; the Church, however, had no reason to be afraid and must use its voice. In reply to newsmen's protests that the Bishops' meeting in São Paulo was being held in secret, Dom Agnelo had countered that "their discussions were a family affair." His view was that the Church had no reason to act clandestinely, but should make its views and actions known openly. He thought the Central Committee should have more frequent meetings so the Bishops could reach agreed positions on important matters. He said the Church was doing many

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things to help the government by providing schools, /medical and social benefits to the people. However, he had refused the National Order of Merit Medal precisely because he wished to preserve his independence of the government. Many military men, he said, had been upset and angered by his refusal, and had not forgiven him.

### 3. Role of the Church in the Future.

Proceeding from the above monologue on the need for independence, the Cardinal made clear his view that the Church must continue politically active and participate fully in shaping future events in Brazil. He said the military, the Church, and the students were now the only real political forces in the country; the military were dominant and would probably remain so. The Church had an important role in seeking to influence the military as well as the students. The Cardinal said the Church was well-regarded by the people; it must maintain and increase its influence among the youth, who were the long-range hope of Brazil. The present political class was discredited; a whole new generation of leaders was necessary. The Church must work with youth and carry out the delicate role of preparing new leaders and influencing them in a constructive manner.

### 4. His Attitudes Toward the Military.

Dom Agnelo was quite critical of the military in general whom he considered narrow, restricted in outlook, and lacking understanding of social and political problems. Their extreme sensitivity and authoritarian attitudes made the situation delicate. He called "incredible" acts carried out by the police and military, such as the expulsion of the French priest from Osasco and the arrest of the three French priests in Minas Gerais, who he alleged "had been tortured." He vehemently and heatedly asserted there was not a shred of evidence against the priests concerned. He told ConGen officers of other arbitrary and high-handed actions against churchmen by military and police in the São Paulo region, who had hauled priests out in the middle of the night for questioning, and had sought to jail the Bishop of Santos, also in the middle of the night. These actions, based on unfounded accusations of "subversion" were an affront to the dignity of the Church. He said he would try to work with the military and police if they would only come to him, and would investigate any legitimate complaint in cooperation with them. He was now doing this, and encouraging DOPS to come to him whenever they received some wild denunciation against a priest. His theory was "let's get the facts" and then determine whether a priest had been guilty of wrong doing.

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As an example of the extreme sensitivity of the military, Dom Agnelo told of a prayer he gave on the anniversary of Sao Paulo, extolling that the city had been founded on the occasion of a religious mass, rather than through violence or by force of arms. He had immediately been contacted by military chaplains to let him know that the military objected to his prayer, which was considered an affront to them.

5. United States-Brazilian Relations.

Some Brazilians blamed the "imperialist" United States for inspiring IA-5 and thought the U.S. Government strongly supported the Act. Other Brazilians were quick to criticize the United States, no matter what we did. Dom Agnelo commented that many Brazilians thought President Nixon's election raised hopes among Brazilian military that the United States would be more tolerant of authoritarian conservative regimes in Latin America. Dom Agnelo said he knew of and was surprised at the violent criticism of Brazil which had appeared in many newspapers in the United States and Europe since the implementation of IA-5. Queried as to what attitude on the part of the United States would be most appropriate in the present circumstances, Dom Agnelo implied that our views should be along the lines of the Bishops' message to President Costa e Silva--in fact, that the message might be a model for the United States. We had to keep in mind the special situation of Brazil and the background, history, and attitudes which made Brazil different from other countries. In Dom Agnelo's opinion, the U.S. Government should privately express to high GOB officials its concern as a friend over recent events in Brazil, and its hope that the country would soon return to the democratic path.

6. Criticism of Himself as Too Cautious.

Dom Agnelo frankly and humorously remarked that he had been criticized as "too moderate" and "slow-moving" in his actions. He had been sharply questioned by European students who had wanted him to adopt a line like Dom Helder Camara. To them he had replied that the Church vis-a-vis Brazil was like a car with a brake and an accelerator. He was accused of always being the brake. This was not so--sometimes you had to use the brake, but he also believed in using the accelerator. To borrow a phrase, he favored negotiation, not confrontation, with respect to the military and the GOB. He believed in "the art of the possible" and thought it was better to get something done even if one did not achieve all aims. Therefore he would try to work with the

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military and with the GOB in an attempt to influence them in a constructive manner. However, he emphasized again and again that the Church must remain active, independent, and vocal. He became quite emotional when discussing activities of the police against worker priests, and said, rather than being cautious, he personally would continue to defend strongly those priests who worked with youth and labor movements.

FROM: Amconsul São Paulo  
DATE: February 26, 1963  
SUBJECT: Bishops' Declaration on Political Situation; Views of Cardinal Archbishop Dom Agostino Rossi  
REF: Rio's 1388 and São Paulo's 157  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF  
INTER-AMERICAN AFFAIRS  
MEX 14 1963

Enclosed is a memorandum of conversation with Dom Agostino Rossi, Cardinal Archbishop of São Paulo and President of National Conference of Bishops, in which he gave interesting information on the declaration presented to President Castello Branco by the General Conference, which met in São Paulo February 22-24, 1963. The Cardinal presented his own views on the attitude which the Church should take in the present political situation, making clear his concern with the GOB and the GOB's efforts to influence church events in Brazil and to encourage marginal reforms.

COMMENT: It is difficult to perceive and forecast to any degree what may be the eventual result of this "confrontation" in this country often called "the largest Catholic nation in the world." This appellation has been termed "ironical" by some observers who point out that the state of the Catholic Church in Brazil is indeed sad and that the great bulk of "Catholics" are the poorest - that is, at least, are so in some ways. In any case more than 90% of the more affluent and influential Catholics are increasingly dissatisfied with the lack of harmony between Church and Government. They are particularly concerned by a tendency on the part of the hierarchy to become more economic and political oriented and by such acts as a "publicity campaign" for the Government. And they are disgusted and even angered with the GOB through the capitalist system and free enterprise and its effect upon something akin to revolution in achieving a "new order."

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