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SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION

Our response to reftel is in two parts. This airgram (Part I) deals with the Catholic Church in the Northeast. Part II will cover the other denominations. Because of considerable earlier reporting on this subject, Parts I and II will focus on the specific questions raised, emphasizing more recent information rather than attempting historical or panoramic treatment. We are assuming that Rio will provide answers to questions of national scope.

The outline of this two-part report follows. A listing of relevant earlier reports which provide more background and detail is attached to this airgram.

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OUTLINE

- A. Presence, Characteristics, and Influence of Foreign Priests
- B. Crisis in the Recruitment of Priests
- C. Modernization of the Profession of Priesthood
 - 1. Renovation of the curriculum and discipline for training new priests
 - 2. Reform of Church finances and standardization of salaries
 - 3. Revision of the injunction on celibacy

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SUMMARY

The Catholic Church in the Northeast of Brazil is in a state of ferment and change accompanying and interacting with national political, social and economic developments. Church ferment stems from pressures within, to adapt traditional and antiquated procedures and attitudes to a modern, changing society, as well as from the response of the Church to the current political situation in Brazil. Among the various stimuli to change and modernization is the influence of foreign North-American and European priests who make up a large proportion of the clergy in the Northeast. The principal internal

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problem which faces the Church, arising out of its antiquation, is a crisis in the profession of priesthood. The numbers of priests have not kept pace with the population and, moreover, priesthood has become a less attractive career for talented and ambitious young men, and has lost relevance to the ways and demands of modern life. The clergy has attacked this crisis vigorously and realistically, moving to reform and modernize the training of priests, exposing them to the full range of social and natural sciences, requiring that they live and work in close involvement with society, and tackling the universal celibacy injunction which has caused a serious thinning of clerical ranks in recent years. At the same time, the Church in the Northeast has been a leader among Latin-American churches in rejecting the traditional, exclusive preoccupation with spiritual matters and committing itself to the uplifting of the material lives of the abjectly poor and backward majority of its flock as an essential step toward fulfilling its spiritual mission.

The Church's explicit concern for social action has contributed to the current conflict between Church and State. "Progressive" priests (of whom there are a number in the Northeast) favoring the uplifting of the people through prompt, even drastic (though generally non-violent) changes in the social and economic structure, have formed alliances of convenience with the political left and tend to be considered subversive by a majority of military officers and high officials of the Federal Government. "Conscientization," which is the means by which the poor majority are to be made aware of their Christian rights, responsibilities, and possibilities, tends to be regarded as subversive agitation by the establishment, and even by many who would agree to the basic need for social and economic change. While the threat of grave sanctions resulting from a direct confrontation between Church and State has restrained the Church and individual clergy and tended to discourage provocations on both sides, the Church is perhaps more united now than it has been in the past decade and remains committed to changing the social and economic order in which its basic tool is conscientization. This situation holds long-term possibilities for conflict but, at the same time, at its best, it also tends to make of the Church a sustained and institutionalized force for modernization of the economic and social structure which is essential to development in the Northeast.

A. Presence, Characteristics, and Influence of Foreign Priests

Foreign priests make up a significant proportion of the Catholic priests in Brazil's seven Northeast states. The great majority are European (mainly Italian, German, Dutch, and Portuguese), but a significant minority is comprised of Canadians and Americans. There is some variation among these foreign nationalities as to their impact and the direction of their

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influence. The Italians and Portuguese are most akin to Brazilians in culture and, from our observation, they seem to be more traditional in their outlook and approach than the other foreign priests. The Dutch and Germans tend to be more radical, if not politically at least in terms of change within the Church, and they tend to integrate somewhat less with the Brazilian clergy than do the Portuguese and the Italians. The American and Canadian priests in the Northeast also seem to be progressive in terms of change and modernization within the Church. Despite these differences, the foreign priests as a whole are a definite stimulus to reexamination and renovation of the traditional church in the Northeast. Within this general framework the following influences and effects are distinguishable.

Although the Church is in a state of ferment and change, Brazilian priests in the Northeast retain certain basic cultural attitudes, among these being paternalism and elitism. As mentioned below, Northeast priests do not think in terms of lay participation in the management of individual churches and, to most, the idea of sharing management with even the most responsible lay groups is still alien, even though it has been recommended by the Vatican. Brazilian priests tend to maintain an aloofness from the laity which persists even among those who are consciously trying to get closer to the laity. Some priests here appreciate the American approach (although they tend to attribute it to Protestant influence), which encourages lay participation in the management of Church affairs and relies heavily on the support of lay groups. Some of these priests have expressed particular admiration of the way in which American priests get close to the people at the lowest economic and social levels.

The American approach is distinctly different from that of the Brazilians, and even from that of Europeans, and tends to make the Americans stand apart, thus opening them to criticism from those who distrust the "American Protestant-influenced" ways. This is not to say that American priests are always distrusted by other foreign or Brazilian clergy in the Northeast. Actually, in general, relations are harmonious.

Foreign priests are generally believed to be more radical politically than the Brazilian clergy as a whole. This is attributed by some to shock which the foreign priest is believed to feel when he confronts the poverty, the wide gap between rich and poor, the paternalistic society and other characteristics of the Northeast for the first time. Whether valid or not, this explanation has been advanced by Brazilian clergy as well as Brazilian military and security officials. A high-ranking security official in Recife recently advised a Consulate General officer that foreign clergy definitely represents a more serious problem to him in terms of political radicalism than does the Brazilian clergy. Other reasons could be cited

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for the comparative radicalism of the foreign priests, among them that such priests, electing to come to the Northeast of Brazil, are likely to have made the choice out of a desire to work in fields of social action and reform. Also, Church leadership in the Northeast is already more radical than elsewhere in Brazil, and it is natural for foreign priests to follow the example set for them by the Brazilian hierarchy when it is consistent with their own tendencies. A visiting American Oblate priest from the South confirmed that he considered his Recife counterparts to be more actively involved politically than his own colleagues in São Paulo. The latter, he explained, take their lead from Cardinal Rossi who is, of course, more moderate than Dom Hélder. A notable example of "radicalism" among foreign priests is the case of Father Comblin, whose "discussion paper," prepared at the request of Dom Hélder for the last CELAM conference, caused a furor in May and June of 1968 (see Recife Report No. 59, June 21, 1968, NOTAL). Father Comblin continues to teach at the Recife Institute of Theology in Olinda and, while probably not as revolutionary as he has been made to appear, he exerts a definite intellectual influence among students in the direction of questioning and changing the ecclesiastical and social orders. Nevertheless, he seems to be more circumspect about his political utterances these days. Another example, which was no doubt prominent in the security official's mind, was that of the two American Oblate Fathers in Recife who accepted voluntary expulsion from Brazil in late December 1968 following their arrest on charges of subversion. Of the four priests in the Northeast who have been subject to government repressive action or the direct and immediate threat of same during the past year (i.e., the two Oblates, Father Comblin, and Frei Geraldo Bonfim, recently sentenced by a military tribunal in Fortaleza), three have been foreigners.

Foreign priests are not as well represented in the higher levels of the Church hierarchy in the Northeast as they are in some other parts of Brazil. They may achieve some prominence at the pastoral and intellectual levels because of their ideas (relatively new for the Northeast) and their initiative, but not for their Church positions. This may be because most of them are relatively young and new to the Northeast and have not had time to work into the hierarchy. It may also be due to the fact that there are enough native priests of ability to fill the more responsible positions in the hierarchy without resorting to foreign priests. It is our understanding that in Amazonia, where there are several foreign bishops, the shortage of Brazilian priests is much more acute than it is in the Northeast.

B. Crisis in the Recruitment of Priests

The recruiting of priests has not kept pace with population growth. According to Father Zildo Rocha, Director of the Recife Theological Institute, the number of priests trained has remained about the same or

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suffered a slight decline in the past twenty years. In fact, three small seminaries have been closed: in São Luis (Maranhão), Fortaleza (Ceará), and João Pessoa (Paraíba), but the Recife Theological Institute has been correspondingly expanded to maintain almost the same total number of trainees. Thus, the ratio of Brazilian priests to population is now between two and three times smaller than fifty years ago. The influx of foreign priests has helped the situation considerably but has not reversed the trend. There are, today, roughly 10,500 inhabitants per priest in the Northeast as opposed to an average of one to 7,000 for Brazil as a whole.

The quality of seminarians has not changed appreciably in the Northeast during recent years, according to Father Rocha. It is true that fewer seminarians come from the upper class nowadays than before, but most continue to come from the middle class or the rural small landowning class, as they have done traditionally, and their quality is quite good. Nevertheless, the political and economic orientation of today's seminarians is different from what it was fifty years ago. In addition to their religious motivations, many seminarians formerly entered the Church with a realistic hope of rising to powerful positions in the "establishment," while today's seminarians are apt instead to be oriented according to aspirations to leadership in social and economic development and change.

C. Modernization of the Profession of Priesthood

Northeast Church leaders recognize the existence of a crisis in what they term the "priestly profession" and consider this to be the most serious issue which the Church faces. If the Church is to survive as a national institution with profound influence on the people, it must increase the numbers and effectiveness of its priests. In the context of traditional society in the Northeast, the Church once provided a desirable career not only for the religious and idealistic but for the ambitious. It held keys both to high status and power. Today, the Church no longer offers these prospects in a degree sufficient to offset the accompanying risks and drawbacks of economic austerity, an antiquated style of life, and partial estrangement from the world. In order to rehabilitate the profession and make it again both attractive and relevant, the Northeast clergy are generally agreed on the following measures:

1. Renovation of the curriculum and discipline for training new priests. This has already been accomplished in the radically reformed Recife Theological Institute, the principal training school for the Northeast. The traditional monopoly of Theology and Philosophy has been broken. Students now take virtually all their classes, not at the seminary itself, but at the Catholic University where they are fully accredited. They take a broad range of subjects in the social and natural sciences in addition to the

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traditional courses. They no longer live the cloistered existence of the past, nor are they subject to the traditional rigorous discipline concerning their association with women (though, of course, they are not expected to become engaged or deeply involved). They live in small groups with families in the urban area of Recife and Olinda and, in addition to their studies, they undertake projects involving pastoral work and independent sociological study. They are encouraged to get as close to the people as possible in order to be able to communicate and identify with them in their later work. The renovation of the Recife Theological Institute is so far unique in Brazil, and perhaps in Latin America. It has been scrutinized very carefully by the Vatican, which at first showed signs of disapproval but has now, apparently, accepted it as a new pattern fitting Northeast Brazil's purposes. It is producing a different kind of priest who will concern himself more directly with the problems of the modern world and be much better equipped to deal with them effectively than were the run of the mill of his predecessors.

2. Reform of Church finances and standardization of salaries. Moves are already underway to provide the clergies of individual dioceses with standard salary systems. Such a system is already being implemented in Ceará. The essential objective is to establish a minimum personal standard of living for priests so that they may live reasonable material lives and be relatively free from personal financial difficulties, so as to devote themselves to the mission of the Church. To achieve this on a large scale, parishes and dioceses need to renovate completely their ramshackle financial structures. Church income derives in varying proportions from collections and rents. The latter are so poorly managed, however, that valuable properties have been allowed to deteriorate and their yields in rent have not kept pace with inflation. Most church property is urban or semi-urban; the Church in the Northeast has little agricultural or other income yielding rural property.

3. Revision of the injunction on celibacy. While some priests in the Northeast are in favor of the outright abolition of the celibacy requirement, a majority, including most of the bishops, is not prepared to take such a step. General agreement has been achieved, however, on a compromise proposal which entails recruiting carefully selected people from professions and communities of the laity to be trained and ordained to serve as priests within the limited circles and communities in which they are already established and have demonstrated leadership. This proposal entails waiving the marriage prohibition for such priests who, in most cases, would already be married. This proposal was carried by the Northeast bishops to the July Assembly of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (similar proposals were also made by bishops of other regions) where it was reportedly approved for forwarding to the Vatican.

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D. Lay Participation

As indicated earlier, participation of lay groups in Church processes remains at a traditionally low level in the Northeast. Clergy are informed of the Vatican's call for much broader and deeper participation by the laity, not only in the pastoral work but in the management of Church and parish affairs, but they have done little to put these recommendations into effect. Priests appear to lack an understanding of the real meaning of lay participation and are reluctant to share power. The larger lay organizations which are active in the Northeast are generally oriented toward evangelical and pastoral objectives and tend to serve more or less as "front organizations" for the Church. Even as such they do not seem to have done well and, in the words of one priest, the Northeast clergy is "rather disillusioned" with them. On the other hand, the degree of lay participation varies widely from parish to parish and much depends on the individual priest. Three types of parish lay organizations which are found in Recife, and probably in other cities as well, are:

1. Parish councils. These are not quite like a Protestant vestry, as they do not have responsibility for managing finances or other church business which is generally retained by the priest. However, they may do any of a great many other things such as raise funds, conduct discussion groups, organize festivities and similar activities, perform evangelical tasks, and so forth. There seem to be no rules for their existence or organization. Some parishes have them, the majority does not.

2. Parish groups or nuclei. These are not so much organizations as divisions within congregations (they may have provided the germ of the lay priest idea). Active parishioners are divided into "nuclei" under a leader selected by the priest, or sometimes by the group itself, on the basis of demonstrated leadership and interest in the Church. The principal objective is to bring the Church, or as much of it as possible short of the actual mass and sacraments, to a broader range of people within the parish.

3. Discussion groups and militants. The more dynamic and charismatic priests--and there are a number of these--tend to collect around them groups of young persons who, though unorganized, perform the function of encouraging audience participation at Church services and form nuclei for group discussions. Priests who are effective at encouraging this sort of participation and whose churches are in the larger cities have said that they are impressed with the sincere, active, and intelligent interest manifested by many of these lay followers, and contrast it with the more sterile past when this sort of interest was extremely rare. Unfortunately, it is difficult to quantify this phenomenon or to compare it systematically

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with the past. However, in the opinion of some of the most able priests, there appears to be a great potential for lay participation on the intellectual level, provided the right kind of encouragement and inspiration is given.

E. The Church and Labor

The Church in the Northeast is heavily committed in the field of labor development, both urban and rural, and its contribution in this area is perhaps more significant than that of any other institution outside or organized labor itself. While in the south of Brazil, international labor organizations play a significant role in labor development, the Church's work in the Northeast is far more significant than that of the internationals. Church-sponsored labor development organizations of state or regional magnitude in the Northeast include: Father Paulo Crespo's Rural Orientation Service of Pernambuco (SORPE), the Rural Agriculture Service (SAR) of Rio Grande do Norte, the Workers' Circles, Catholic Worker Action, and the Federation of Christian Labor. SORPE and SAR were founded by the Church to provide organizational assistance and guidance to rural labor organizations during their early formative years. Much is owed particularly to SORPE for the nurture of an extremely delicate, embryonic rural labor movement into what is now a viable national organization which is beginning to exercise a degree of independent influence. The Workers' Circles and Catholic Worker Action have chapters under the management of one or more priests in the major cities of the Northeast and receive some regular diocesan support. The Northeast is not a hospitable climate for labor development--among other reasons because of the backward mentality of the laboring class and the superabundance of poor laborers--and these organizations have been forced to start at the most elementary level of worker education and organization, hence their tangible accomplishments are few so far. Nevertheless, their elementary labor educational work has been of fundamental importance, and the assistance and counsel they have given to labor groups and individuals has been significant and not otherwise available. In addition to the state and regional organizations, there are the efforts of individual parish priests in urban as well as rural areas. The work of Father Melo in the municipality of Cabo, south of Recife, is the best known example of this kind of program. Father Melo, with the exception of a brief period last year, has long dominated the Cabo rural workers' union, and his rural workers cooperative and land distribution work have received considerable publicity as well. Labor development in Cabo has been complicated by the rapid industrial growth of the city and the relatively quick transition which is now taking place from a traditional rural cane plantation economy to a modern industrial economy. In this process, Father Melo's programs, characterized by conservatism, heavy paternalism,

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and dependence on the good will of the sugar magnates, seem to be losing ground. Although favored by the state and federal government labor agencies, Father Melo appears to have lost some of his former influence over the workers and has come to be regarded as a reactionary force by many of his fellow priests in the labor field.

It should be noted that virtually all of the types and identifications of organizations above depend often for their survival, as well as for their effectiveness, on the self-sacrificing devotion of individual priests who usually must accept the barest of living conditions while tackling with great pains and patience tasks as enormous and discouraging as the bootstrap uplifting of masses of such abject humanity. Sufficient motivation for this work is not often found outside the Church, except perhaps among organizations on the extreme revolutionary left. The priest, however, is an especially appropriate performer of rural labor development work because he has the respect of the camponeses, the prestige of the institutional Church, and the acceptance--nowadays often grudging--of the proprietors. While labor agitators can be beaten and evicted, or even killed by the proprietor's hired thugs, the priest is much more difficult to get rid of and in practice he generally manages to hang on with the help of minor compromises with the proprietors.

F. Conscientization and Social Action

The fundamental change in attitude of the Church in the Northeast during the past two decades more or less has been that, whereas it formerly limited itself to a strictly spiritual mission and accepted the backward and oppressive temporal order of the cane plantation economy, it is now definitely committed to the uplifting of the backward, "downtrodden majority" as an essential step toward the accomplishment of its spiritual mission. The new concept seems to be accepted even by conservative priests, and the differences in outlook among progressives, radicals, conservatives, and others, resolve themselves into questions of means and time. The abject condition of rural workers, peasants, and small farmers of the Northeast, particularly those in the coastal region traditionally dominated by the cane plantations, is based, naturally enough, on an abject state of mind characterized by an absence of the will to improve and ignorance of the possibilities and necessities. It is this state of abjectness which is perhaps the main reason why labor development has moved so slowly.

The term "conscientization" was coined for the process of uplifting the mentality of the peasant in order that he should have the will to improve and the ability to understand how to go about it. It is a central theme in the pastoral work of the Church in the Northeast. However, the Army and the political-economic establishment in the Northeast tend to regard it as an insidious form of subversion which deserves to be stamped out forcibly. As a result, the term itself is perhaps somewhat less in vogue now and other euphemisms are used for essentially the same concept, which in its general outline (apart from questions of means and time) could probably be made acceptable even to most of its critics. The Church's labor development

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organizations have been dealing with conscientization since before the term was coined--indeed, conscientization comprises the better part of the work of SORPE and SAR, of Catholic Worker Action, Workers' Circles, and many other lesser organizations. At its best, conscientization has been conceived as a matter of educating the people to their responsibilities to themselves and society, as well as to their basic economic "rights." At its worst, it has been directed to arousing indiscriminate indignation, thus provoking suppression and earning the hostility of some responsible and well intentioned people.

In the spirit of conscientization, Dom Hélder conceived the idea of Action, Justice, and Peace as a national movement of non-violent pressure to uplift the people's mentality and economic condition. While conscientization was an essential basic step, however, as in labor development, Action, Justice, and Peace was to go beyond that to bring non-violent pressure to bear wherever possible to break down barriers obstructing the development of a socially and economically democratic society. The movement was to be based on nuclei of laymen led at the top by priests. Starting with educated people, it was intended to extend ultimately to workers and peasants at the lowest economic levels. While non-violent in concept, it was intended to act with great militance and vigor, following the examples of the Indian Congress Party under Gandhi and the SCLC under Martin Luther King. However, it did not arouse the public interest and participation hoped for by its founders. Almost half the priests who supported it in Pernambuco were foreigners (including a number of Americans) and it succeeded, during the three months of its active existence, in attracting very little lay support. After Institutional Act No. 5, ~~the existing situation~~, Dom Hélder personally disarmed it by declaring publicly that fit conditions no longer existed for a non-violent movement of its kind. Since then, the movement's steering committee of a few priests and others, presided over by Dom Hélder, has met monthly to discuss the situation and plans, but no public activities have been undertaken. It is difficult to blame Dom Hélder for retreating under the threat of strong sanctions when he lacked organized popular support, but at the same time one may wonder what hope there is for militant, non-violent Christian action in the Northeast if it collapses at the first encounter with stern opposition.

"Committees of Justice and Peace," linked with the Papal Peace and Justice Commission, continue to function in the Northeast though they do not at present seem to offer real possibilities for the solution of serious conflicts. These committees antedate Action, Justice, and Peace, having been set up under Vatican II. They continue to discuss specific cases of individual injustice as well as broader social injustices but, since they have no means of action, they have had very little impact.

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Conscientization proceeds under the same or different names through a wide variety of diocesan and parochial activities throughout the Northeast. In Ceará, for example, a diocesan radio station with statewide coverage has daily programs which manage to include a measure of conscientization, while at the same time accepting commercial sponsors for its conventional programs. Dom Frágoso, the interior diocese of Crateús, operates agricultural, community, and cooperative development programs in which conscientization is an important element. Other dioceses and parishes have their own programs in which conscientization is important. As it is a key element in what the Church conceives of as its mission in the Northeast, conscientization is also a key element in the conflict between Church and State. It is regarded with particular hostility by the landed proprietors whose interests are most directly affected, but it also arouses apprehension in the Army (which tends to fear any kind of agitation), in industrial circles, and in the federal and state labor agencies and police organizations whose personnel tend to reflect the interests of the economic establishment. Because it has constituted a chief irritant in relations between Church and State, it has been soft-pedalled somewhat by most of its Church practitioners since the imposition of IA-5 in order to avoid a confrontation between the Church and the Army. But the Northeast Church remains committed to it, and its potential, both for constructive purposes and for conflict, remains critically high.

G. The Church, the Military, and the State

Church-Military relations in the Northeast are characterized by a tense simmering under a calm surface. Although severe strains have occurred, such as when churches were closed briefly in Fortaleza to protest the sentencing of a priest there (see Recife A-58), serious crises have been avoided and no confrontations appear to be in the immediate offing. Church-State relations present interesting contrasts to the Church-Military relationship. The highest levels of the various state governments tend to have cordial relations with their church counterparts, even those considered radical or virtually subversive by the Army. For example, relations between Pernambuco Governor Nilo Coelho and Archbishop Hélder Câmara have been friendly and cooperative in the past, while Dom Hélder is anathema to a majority of the field grade officers who form the staffs of the Fourth Army and Seventh Military Region. Gen. Alfredo Souto Malan, Commander of the Fourth Army, is regarded by progressive clergy as a reasonable, fair man, and a liberal among the Military. He is also an old friend of Dom Basilo Penido, the progressive Abbot of the Benedictine Monastery in Olinda. Malan's tendency to good will toward the Church is often frustrated by an active alliance between hard-line field officers on the staffs, and a corresponding group (supported in part by rural landed interests) of local petty politicians,

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police officials, and former conservative student activists who nurse a near-fanatical hatred of Dom Hélder, and work assiduously to discredit him and the progressive clergy along with him. Particularly active on the military side are the Second Sections (i.e., G-2s) of the Seventh Military Region and the Fourth Army, which are headed by competent, energetic officers and have thus far succeeded by a combination of threats and persuasion in neutralizing most of the more politically radical clergy. The G-2 officers say that they are satisfied with the uneasy equilibrium which now exists. They are particularly pleased at the apparent success of the efforts of the Federal Government through diplomatic and internal Brazilian channels to muffle Dom Hélder and the Catholic radicals in the Northeast. As examples, they point to the recent letters from the Vatican to Dom Hélder restraining Dom Hélder's political polemics and to what they see as a movement on the part of the more conservative national church leadership toward restraining the progressive clergy from political activism. On the local level, the Army has laid the responsibility on individual officers and non-coms to keep an eye on church activities and particularly to attend masses faithfully. The purposes are to be alert to signs of subversion and to put the priests on notice that they are being observed with keen interest. The G-2s have also given support to some semi-professional youth activists to circulate pamphlets in churches denouncing "subversive" priests. The effects of this sort of activity have been on the whole malign. The priests are aware of the G-2 connection with these activists and also of the G-2 connection with the Command of Communist Hunters (CCC) which has been responsible for acts of mischief and violence during the past year against progressive elements of the Church, and the result has been merely to arouse further bad feeling and a widespread suspicion that the authorities are involved in much worse kinds of thuggery. Despite all of this, at its best, the Army under the command and counsel of its most responsible officers, has exercised restraint and has genuinely and, on the whole, successfully sought to avoid provocations, and to respect both individual priests and church activities.

H. The Church, Repression, and the Left

It was supposed by many, somewhat earlier in the year, that the imposition of the institutional acts would drive church radicals farther to the left, possibly even into the arms of the communists and "Marighellistas." Although there is evidence that the latter are trying to enlist individual clergy in united frontefforts, there are few signs that they are being successful as yet. The Government's various suppressive actions around the country have rather served to unite the Church in the Northeast to an extent unprecedented in the past decade. If the center of gravity has shifted somewhat to the left, it also appears that many of the former radicals have

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drawn in their horns, at least temporarily. There are exceptions, of course. At least three priests (one a foreigner) are reported to have taken part in meetings of the Brazilian Revolutionary Front which is an embryonic organization intended to form a united front of "democratic" and communist elements. Some meetings of this organization, moreover, have been held in the Benedictine Monastery in Olinda (although probably not with the knowledge of the Abbott). These do not, however, represent a departure from the previous norm, since a few individuals and institutions have been doing similar things in the Northeast for at least several years. Perhaps the more significant aspect of these phenomena, therefore, is that they appear to be less common now than a year ago. Prior to the institutional acts, some bishops and priests were reported to be in communication with extreme leftist leaders, and the sentiments which generated this communication probably continue to exist even though apparently with less expression for the time being. The correspondence of Dom Fragoso, Bishop of Cratêus, with former Pernambuco Governor Miguel Arraes, and Dom Fragoso's inconclusive correspondence with Carlos Marighella are symptomatic of the continued temptation on the part of the Progressive clergy to maintain a dialogue with the extreme left. Radicals, and some progressives, among the Northeast clergy are not completely intimidated, moreover, by the Church's theoretical rejection of violence. Rather, they tend to give some degree of acceptance to the counter-argument that institutionalized violence already exists, and that by taking arms the people would be really acting only in self-defense. Dom Fragoso, Archbishop José Maria Pires of João Pessoa, and even Dom Hélder himself, have indicated varying degrees of sympathy with this line of argument. It must be admitted that this sentiment could find wider and stronger expression at almost any time given the right conditions or provocations. For the moment, however, the radicals do genuinely appear to have been effectively restrained by a combination of threats of severe sanctions by the authorities, moral suasion, and other pressures from the Vatican, and by the counsel and instruction of the national church hierarchy.

By far the most extensive common ground between the Church and the extreme left is the academic field in which both operate and which affords continuous opportunity for discussion. The students are, of course, to some extent influenced and infiltrated by the extreme left, and their teachers, who include many priests, are in the position of having to deal with the political thought and activity which result. Thus, the priests are constantly exposed to socialist theory and argument, some of which naturally rubs off. The Priests may also naturally develop close relations with extreme leftist students, become associated with leftist student activities, and eventually become tagged with the leftist label whether it is deserved or not. In the meantime, there is continuous encouragement to synthesize Christian and

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Marxist doctrine. Nevertheless, even the most progressive clergy who are close to the extreme left tend to adhere to the Church and its doctrines and to consider themselves priests first. If they had to choose between social revolution and the Church, they would probably stick with the latter. They rarely seem to become convinced Marxists themselves, but rather continue to regard Marxism as a symptom of deep social and economic ills, which must be understood and treated. Aside from the academic field, there is little ground for contact between the Church and the extreme left in the Northeast. While the Church is active in the labor field, the extreme left has failed to establish significant influence there, and the priests who operate in it are, on the whole, anti-communist with moderate leftist leanings.

I. External Influences on the Northeast Church

The Church in the Northeast is very interested in CELAM and has contributed to that organization's leadership as well as to its philosophy and policy. CELAM meetings are followed among Northeast clergy with high interest and two of CELAM's most active leaders, Dom Avelar Brandão of Terezina (Piauí), CELAM's President, and Dom Hélder, are from the region. To the most progressive clergy especially, CELAM is looked on as an important national, as well as international, forum for discussing and promoting the Church's role in social revolution. The conclusions of the CELAM conference in Medellín are frequently cited by the region's progressive churchmen, together with the social encyclicals of various Popes, in defense of greater Church involvement in social problems. Other progressive Catholic institutions probably also influence the thinking of Northeast clergy to a lesser extent. Local priests are quite aware of the activities of Father Illich and Father Vekemans, for example, but the impact of both seems to be on the decline. Father Illich's criticism of American Catholic involvement in Latin America struck responsive chords among some local clergy, particularly the foreigners (he has lectured in Petrópolis), but his other activities and ideas seem to be much less well known. Priests from Europe have served to augment a natural taste for liberal European religious thought, but the names of individual new centers of such thought do not seem to stand out. Despite the many American Catholic missionaries, priests, sisters, and others who are at work here, the influence of American Catholic institutions has not really taken hold. The magnet of Rome, centuries of European influence on scholarship, philosophy, social, political and economic principles, combined with the historical conservatism of the American Catholic Church, and some latter-day antipathy and suspicion concerning the colossus of the North all contribute to the fact that Northeast clergy still look mainly to Europe for inspiration.

Enclosure: Messages Dealing with Brazilian Church

CONTRIBUTORS: DMLion; RHMelton

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MESSAGES DEALING WITH BRAZILIAN CHURCH
Sent from Recife, Jan 1 - Aug 15, 1969

ENCLOSURE TO
Recife A-83

<u>CABLE</u>	<u>AIRGRAM</u>	<u>REPORT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
		1	1/2	Recife Archdiocese Orders Sermon Read Supporting Arrested Priest
14			1/4	Interview with Dom Helder
	A-4 Encl. 1		1/10	Church Reaction to IA-5
	A-5		1/14	Dom Helder Calls Upon Catholic Jurists to Promote Social Justice on Worldwide Scale
	A-13		2/4	Visit to Fortaleza--Dom Delgado Comments on Church-State Relations
	A-30		3/20	Dom Helder Intensifies Opposition to Regime
	A-31		3/20	Dom Helder Attacks Government's Failure to Implement Basic Reforms
	A-38		4/16	Two Northeastern Archbishops Comment on Recent Events in Brazil
	A-44		5/6	Dom Helder Criticizes Recent Punitive Action Against Students
	A-48		5/16	Dom Helder Comments on Current Political Developments
	A-50		5/22	Dom Helder Camara the Spokesman for the Third World
	A-53		5/28	Moderate Archbishop Comments on Recent Political Developments
	A-58		6/11	Fortaleza Bishop Requests Closing of Churches
	A-60		6/13	Murdered Priest in Recife
	A-65		7/1	Dom Helder Discusses Murder of Recife Priest and Preparations for CNBB General Assembly

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<u>CABLE</u>	<u>AIRGRAM</u>	<u>REPORT</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>SUBJECT</u>
	A-61		7/7	Dom Helder Criticizes Government at Mass for Murdered Priest
	A-66		7/3	Northeast Churchmen Comment on Upcoming CNBB General Assembly and Recent Trends in Church-State Relations
	A-71		7/10	Possible Vatican Intervention to Forestall Church-State Confrontation in Brazil
	A-78		7/30	Consulate General Seeks Broadened Dialogue with Northeast Churchmen
	A-81		8/12	Progressive Priest from Northeast Comments on the Results of CNBB General Assembly
		HBC-938	1/29	The Clearing of Dom Helder's Draft Speeches for his Visit to the United States with Cardinal Eugenio Sales of Salvador
		HBC-955	3/26	The Brazilian Revolutionary Front in Recife
		HBC-960	4/25	Current Relations Between Clergy and State in the Northeast
		HBC-962	4/29	Increased Right-Wing Terrorism in Recife
		HBC-963	5/2	Conversations Between Archbishop Helder Camara of Recife and Olinda with President Eduardo Frei of Chile
		HBC-971	5/20	Increasing Involvement of the Church in the Current Recife Student Situation
		HBC-974	5/28	Circumstances and Local Reactions to the Murder of Padre Antonio Henrique
		HBC-976	6/3	Reactions to the Murder of Padre Antonio Henrique

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