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ACTION ARA 16

INFO GPM 03, H 02, INR 07, P 04, CIAE 00, DODE 00, RSC 01, USIA 12, NSC 10,

NSA 02, AID 28, PC 04, E 15, COM 08, RSR 01, MM 01, /114 W

Brasilia 1769

1/5/68

P R 5-42006Z JAN 68  
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 653  
INFO AMEMBASSY RIO DE JANEIRO 785  
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 279  
AMCONSUL RECIFE 107

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RIO POUCH OTHER CONSULATES

SUBJ: CHURCH-STATE DEVELOPMENTS: PRESIDENT MEETS WITH ARCH-BISHOP PROBLEMS IN NORTHEAST

1. PRESIDENT COSTA E SILVA MET JAN 18 IN RIO WITH ARCHBISHOP AVELOR BRANDAO, WHO ACTING AS REPRESENTATIVE OF NATIONAL BISHOPS CONFERENCE. AFTERWARDS, BRANDAO ISSUED STATEMENT SAYING MEETING EXCELLENT AND COVERED WIDE RANGE OF SUBJECTS. SAID HE RECOMMENDED TO PRESIDENT

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FORMATION SPECIAL GOVT COMMISSION TO EXAMINE PAPAL ENCYCLICALS AND OTHER CHURCH STUDIES ON LATIN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT WITH VIEW TOWARD INCORPORATING INTO GOVT PROGRAMS PRINCIPLES STATED THEREIN. ALSO SAID WOULD RECOMMEND CREATION COMMITTEE BY BISHOPS CONFERENCE FOR EXCHANGE OF OPINIONS WITH GOVERNMENTAL

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COUNTERPART. DECLARED CHURCH DID NOT WANT INTERFERE WITH ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS BUT RATHER INTERPRET "SIGNS OF TIMES" AND CONTRIBUTE TO "HARMONIOUS DEVELOPMENT." STATED HE AND PRESIDENT HAD AGREED THAT BISHOPS CONFERENCE AND CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AUTHORITIES WOULD TRY "ESTABLISH CONTACT" WHEN DIFFICULTIES AROSE.

2. IN SEPARATE BUT RELATED DEVELOPMENT, RECENT PRESS STORIES RE MISUSE BY NORTHEASTERN CHURCHMEN OF

FUNDS DONATED TO CHURCH BECOMING CAUSE CELEBRE IN NORTHEAST AND ATTRACTING NATIONAL ATTENTION. THOSE INVOLVED EVIDENTLY LOANED CHURCH MONEY AT HIGH INTEREST TO PERNAMBUCO "BUSINESSMAN" WHO ABSCONDED. ACCORDING CONSULATE RECIFE SOME POLITICIANS USING ISSUE TO ATTACK

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CHURCH PROGRESSIVES FOR HYPROCRISY. CONSULATE ALSO REPORTS THERE GENERAL BELIEF THAT ALLEGATIONS PROBABLY TRUE BUT PREDICTS THAT DEMAGOGIC EXPLOITATION BY ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE PRESS AND POLITICAL ELEMENTS WILL BOOMERANG BY GENERATING PUBLIC SYMPATHY FOR CHURCHMEN INVOLVED.

3. AFTER MEETING PRIVATELY IN RECIFE JAN 18, FIFTEEN NORTHEASTERN BISHOPS, HEADED BY DOM HELDER CAMARA, ISSUED NOTE SAYING FACTS OF CASE BEING DISTORTED AS PART OF CAMPAIGN TO "INTIMIDATE" CHURCH IN ITS DEFENSE OF JUSTICE AND SOCIAL REFORM. DAY EARLIER, OTHER NORTHEASTERN BISHOPS ISSUED STRONGLY WORDED STATEMENT IN FORTALEZA ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHEAST WHICH DENOUNCED "SLAVERY" IN AREA AND AFFIRMED BISHOPS' DETERMINATION STRUGGLE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE DESPITE RISKS.

4. COMMENT: PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH ARIHBISHOP WAS POSITIVE STEP TOWARD RESOLUTION RECENT CHURCH-ADMINISTRATION DIFFICULTIES, APPARENTLY LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR

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HANDLING SUCH ABRASIVE INCIDENTS IN FUTURE. ON OTHER

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HAND, NORTHEASTERN BISHOPS STATEMENTS POINT UP UNDERLYING

FERMENT IN CHURCH-ADMINISTRATION RELATIONS AND DEMONSTRATE  
THERE AMPLE AREAS POTENTIAL CONFLICT.

GP-3. TUTHILL

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