

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION REPORT

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1. COUNTRY: BRAZIL
2. SUBJECT: (C) Gen. MURICY Still Main Link in Church-State Liaison
3. ISC NUMBER:
4. DATE OF INFORMATION: 1971 - 1973
5. PLACE AND DATE OF ACQ: Rio de Janeiro, 17 January 1973
6. EVALUATION: SOURCE B INFORMATION 1
7. SOURCE: Gen. (Ret) Antonio Carlos da Silva MURICY, former Chief of Staff of the Army and now a successful businessman.
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12. ORIGINATOR: USDAO BRAZIL
13. PREPARED BY: ARTHUR S. MOURA
14. APPROVING AUTHORITY: Brigadier General, GS Defense Attache

15. SUMMARY:

(C) During a long and candid conversation with General MURICY in Rio de Janeiro, he filled me in on recent developments in his continuing role as the principal buffer between Church and State in BRAZIL. This IR discusses that situation and his views on it.

1. (C) While Chief of Staff of the Army (1969-70), General Antonio Carlos da Silva MURICY carried out an ancillary (albeit informal) role as the Government's principal point of contact with the Brazilian Catholic Church hierarchy. General MURICY's quarters were well known to leading churchmen--including those of so-called progressive views--and I saw several high ranking ecclesiastical officials there on numerous occasions. Even though General MURICY is militantly anti-Communist, he also is a Catholic out of conviction and is able to reconcile the Church's urgent search for new roles with the Government's equally urgent awareness that "progressive" priests often give aid and comfort to deadly terrorists.

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2. (c) During two lengthy meetings with General MURICY in Rio de Janeiro on 17 January 1973, he recapitulated the status of the Church and the evolution of his role as a liaison element between the Church hierarchy and the Brazilian Government. Initially, General MURICY asked me if I had read the series of articles which the newspaper "O Estado de São Paulo" had written on the realities of Catholicism in BRAZIL. I assured General MURICY that I had read the articles with great care and that I had retained them for future reference. He said that solid Catholic laymen and pragmatic priests had discussed the conclusions of the articles with him and that all were in general agreement with their revelations. Moreover, he admitted that he and some of his friends (laymen and priests), had been consulted by "O Estado" reporters and had furnished some of the facts used in the series.

3. (U) Despite my insistence that I had read and clipped the articles, General MURICY insisted on reiterating the essence of their content. Thus, he highlighted the following points:

a. Brazilian Catholicism is in a state of crisis.

b. The crisis will be resolved and BRAZIL will emerge with a far smaller genuinely Catholic population, but those who survive the crisis will be devout and conscientious.

c. Even though the Vatican says that BRAZIL has 80 million of the world's 650 million Catholics, and is the world's largest Catholic country, the fact is that most of BRAZIL's Catholics become Catholic once every 10-years when the census is taken.

d. In Rio de Janeiro's shanty-towns, for instance, Catholics are outnumbered by Protestants and there are two Spiritualists for every Catholic.

e. A recent survey among secondary school students and their mothers revealed that, in general, religious values are transferred from "non-Catholic" to "non-Catholic," since only about 10% of the mothers were practicing Catholics and even fewer of their children could be called authentic Catholics.

f. About 100 years ago, the census revealed that only 3 in 100 people were non-Catholic. The Church listed 99.7% of the population as Catholics in 1870---including 350,000 children under age one and 1,500,000 slaves!

g. Of today's nearly 100 million Brazilians, about 20-25% avow that they are non-Catholics. Under the most generous interpretation, only approximately 20 million Brazilians can be classified as meeting the minimal standards of a practicing Catholic.

h. The decline of Catholicism in BRAZIL can be verified in terms of statistics relating to baptism, marriage, and confirmation. During the past 10 years, baptisms have remained 3 million annually, despite a population growth rate of approximately 3% per year and a huge backlog of unbaptized individuals. Even more startling is the decline of confirmations between 1958 and 1968. The number went down from 1.5 million in 1958 to 500,000 in 1968. Not only is baptism no longer automatic and confirmation even less so, but church weddings have stagnated at about 400,000 per year, despite a 20% annual increase in weddings. The obvious conclusion is that a church wedding is no longer regarded as an essential concomitant of the civil ritual.

i. The decline of Catholicism in BRAZIL is evident in the number of young people pursuing studies leading to the priesthood. In 1961, there were 1,700 seminarians (exclusive of the religious orders) nearing the end of their studies. By 1970, there were only 813 seminarians ready to be ordained. BRAZIL has one priest for every 6,000 Catholics. The number of Parish Priests declined from 9,000 in 1961 to 8,000 in 1969. (The grand total of all categories of priests was 13,152 in 1970.)

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j. Even though there are far fewer Protestants than Catholics in BRAZIL, the number of Protestant clergymen (17,000) far exceeds the number of priests.

k. The Catholic Church in BRAZIL has suffered a loss in prestige due to the increase in public schools, especially at the university level, attendant decline in the number of Catholic Schools. In addition, Catholic daily newspapers have disappeared from large cities. Despite the existence of 200 Catholic Church-owned radio stations and three television channels, these dedicate themselves largely to commercial activities.

l. Of the 8,066 priests representing Orders and Congregations in Brazil, 5,066 are Brazilians. The Secular Priests (a total of 5,066) have 1,056 naturalized Brazilians in their midst.

m. For a variety of reasons, including political involvement, priests left BRAZIL in 1969; 124 left in 1970; and, 171 in 1971.

n. Including Deacons and Presbyters, it is estimated that there are 61,000 Protestant preachers in BRAZIL. Statistics on the number of Protestants in BRAZIL range from 3 to 10 million.

o. It is estimated that up to one-third of underprivileged Brazilians subscribe to one form or another of Spiritualism.

p. (C) Even though he is proud to list himself among the devout, General MURICY says that he is too much of a realist to ignore the menace the Church's position in contemporary BRAZIL. He claims the fundamental problem is the unwillingness of certain leaders in the hierarchy to admit that there are sharp differentiations in the backward condition of BRAZIL in terms of development. Catholicism reflects the long-standing high degree of conservatism. Moreover, he asserts, the Catholic Church of Brazil was ineffective in "de-Africanizing" the slaves, in religious terms. Over the years, he went on, the few priests who pursued intellectual reform, being ordained, emerged as politically conscious rebels rather than saviors of souls. As these articulate and frustrated clergymen viewed themselves and the Church, in essentially secular activities, a highly negative process within the Church, General MURICY said, they generated confusion and doubt among their flock. This perplexity has been noted by the declining influence of the Church, as attested by the unorthodox behavior of priests and laymen for religious expression (Protestantism). General MURICY said that real or titular Catholics who were distrustful of the Church and among its clergymen. In General MURICY's view, priests concluded that their Church had been identified with the military elites and that the time had come for a break with the so-called progressive route, he said, with all the good intentions but who were painfully naive. As a result, BRAZIL suffered a final crippling blow through the Church's involvement in deadly terrorism. It is General MURICY's view that wavering Catholics (especially among the less educated) who turned to violence) abandoned even their barely held faith in Catholicism over the involvement of priests in terrorism. The stigma which accrued to the Church through the actions of its members, he went on, when one considers the essentially Catholic security establishment began to erode.

q. In the Church-State area that General MURICY said, he said in his determination to assist his Church in its efforts. His retirement from active duty has not lessened his effectiveness on behalf of understanding between the hierarchy and the military establishments. As a matter of fact,

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flexibility and freedom of maneuver. When he was Chief of Staff of the Army, he said, his contacts with senior leaders of the Church often were clandestine, at his residence and inhibited by his very tight official schedule. Now, he pointed out, he has the financial and functional independence to spend an entire day meeting with priests and influential laymen. Moreover, he does so openly, either at his office or at his residence, or at any other place considered convenient. Among his big trumps are his Revolutionary credentials; the fact that he is a close friend of his Military Academy classmate, Army Minister GEISEL; the absence of any other four-star General (active or retired) with his access to Government and Church, and his considerable record of achievements in "keeping the lid on" in trying situations between Church and State.

6. (C) General MURICY said that one of his mainstays in promoting Church-State dialogue has been Dom Eugenio SALLES, Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro. The two have been friends since the Cardinal was in Bahia and they have acted together often to resolve delicate problems. Since retiring, General MURICY reports that he has enlisted the cooperation of CANDIDO MENDES, the layman intellectual he regards as most influential domestically and abroad. General MURICY said that CANDIDO MENDES and the Government had been on a collision course ever since 1964 and that the Government had lost the most as a result of its intransigence. He contacted CANDIDO MENDES and was impressed with his Catholic purity, patriotism, intellectual brilliance and willingness to sustain meaningful dialogue with the Government. Investigation revealed that the major security reservation toward CANDIDO MENDES flowed from the fact that he had been a lecturer at the leftist "Brazilian Institute of Social Studies" (IBES) during the GOULART Regime. MURICY went to Army Minister GEISEL and convinced him of the pettiness of the charge. The Minister ordered the security services to destroy the CANDIDO MENDES file and to stop any surveillance of his activities. The gratitude of CANDIDO MENDES has been expressed in tireless and effective liaison activities. Now, General MURICY said, when CANDIDO MENDES learns of some source of Church-State friction, he comes to him immediately and they work out a strategy designed to relieve the pressure. While General MURICY recognizes that CANDIDO MENDES maintains contact with foreign journalists, academicians, and others opposed to the 1964 Revolution, he would like to think that the distinguished Catholic layman might be slightly more restrained in his criticisms. More importantly, he went on, the collaboration of CANDIDO MENDES has opened new horizons for Church-State dialogue.

7. (C) Another individual cited by General MURICY as most helpful in relieving Church-State tensions in BRAZIL is the Papal Nuncio, Monsignor Humberto MOZZONI. According to General MURICY, the Nuncio is active and firm. He apparently is under orders from the Vatican to keep Brazilian "progressives" under control and to downgrade the influence of controversial Bishop Dom HELDER Camara of Recife. General MURICY says that he sees the Nuncio often and that they have worked out a very warm and constructive relationship. The Nuncio reportedly has assured him that the Pope does not wish to antagonize the Brazilian Government in any way and that he is under Vatican instructions to promote contacts between the Church and the Government. One of the most promising such efforts involves the often controversial Archbishop of São Paulo, Dom Evaristo ARNS. It appears, General MURICY went on, that the Nuncio has won over Bishop ARNS to a posture of willingness to cooperate with the Government. General MURICY has been in touch with the Bishop and found him willing but deeply hurt over the hostility of General HUMBERTO de Souza Mello, Commander of the II Army in São Paulo. MURICY went to HUMBERTO and told him that he was going to have to swallow his pride and made a public gesture of friendship toward Bishop ARNS. Moreover, MURICY said that the gesture would be in the form of a call on ARNS at the time of his likely early elevation to Cardinal. He said that HUMBERTO sought to change the subject and otherwise indicated his unwillingness to cooperate. General MURICY claims that he has received assurances from Army Minister GEISEL that the blustery HUMBERTO has been directed to change his posture toward the Church and its hierarchy.

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8. (C) In response to my query on the names of the most important supporters of Church-State understanding, General MURICY listed:

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Army Minister GEISEL,
MG Adolpho Joao de PAULA COELHO, CG 6th Army Division in P
VADM ROBERVAL FIZARRO, Commandant of the Marine Corps
Col. PACIFICO, City of Rio de Janeiro Agency of the National Intelligence

General MURICY added that he has made some progress in wearing down the attitudes which General FONTOURA, Chief of the National Intelligence, toward the Church and some of its leaders. He has no illusions over continuing skepticism, but said that the avoidance of a collision of the Sesquicentennial celebrations tended to prove to FONTOURA dialogue was possible. General MURICY then went on to say that other influential priests had decided to defy the Government

its which would have been uttered during Church services of the September 1972 Sesquicentennial ceremonies in Sao Paulo. M of the plan and decided that its implementation would produce a split. He mobilized all of his friends on both sides and enlisted help as well to avoid the confrontation. The success of that effort led General FONTOURA to admit that "dialogue is better than war," according to MURICY. On the other hand, General MURICY said, he lost the Antonio Jorge CORREA, head of the Sesquicentennial festivities, the Church's lack of cooperation and alleged attempt to undermine his MURICY working to bring CORREA back into the fold.

COMMENT: General MURICY is now more optimistic than ever for Church-State relations. He is firmly convinced that the and that the major irritants have been removed or neutralized of optimism lies in the expanding rolls of men of good will who dedicated to the cause of understanding and constructive cooperation Catholic Church and the Brazilian Government. If he in the of men of the stature of GEISEL, ARNS and CANDIDO MACHADO, MURICY acknowledged that the grim days of 1968-1970 have given way to a new optimism.

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