

Churches

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January 3, 1964

Brazilian Archbishops Order Lay Catholic Groups  
to Cease Leftist Activities  
Embassy's A-682 of November 27, 1963

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About the beginning of December, the Central Committee of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) addressed a letter, prepared during the Ecumenical Council in Rome, to Candido Padim, General Advisor (Assistente) of Brazilian Catholic Action (Ação Católica Brasileira--ACB) and National Advisor of Catholic University Youth (Juventude Universitária Católica--JUC), ordering these organizations to refrain from generalized cooperation with non-Catholic leftist groups, especially the student Popular Action (Ação Popular--AP). The text of this letter was read in the Federal Chamber of Deputies by PDC Deputy Cid Furtado, and published in the December 28 issue of Jornal do Brasil.

The directives contained in the letter remind ACB that it must follow the true teachings and social doctrine of the church, in close cooperation with the regular church hierarchy. In particular, it must beware of the Popular Action groups:

"(We) manifest to our advisors and militants the pre-occupation of the Bishops with Popular Action. This movement, by its naturalist orientation, does not represent authentic Christian thought, and although having positive aspects in some dioceses, has caused serious damage in various others."

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Rio de Janeiro

Padim is therefore ordered to prevent members of the Catholic Secondary School Youth (JEC) from joining Popular Action, and to permit Catholic University Youth (JUC) members to join only (1) when they are especially trained and devoted to this type of activity, and (2) when they enter with the aim of substantially modifying Popular Action toward a true Christian position.

In more general terms, the letter orders that Catholic militants and organizations:

"...should not enter into united fronts with movements arising from Marxist or liberal-capitalist doctrine or ideology."

Catholics may accept support from such organizations only "with great prudence".

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Comment: In recent months, the Church has become increasingly disillusioned with Popular Action as a focus for non-Communist youth activities. Since the Archbishop's letter, the breach between the two has been further widened by Popular Action's apparent treachery in collaborating in the election of a pro-Communist Directorate for the newly-founded Confederation of Agricultural workers (CONTAG) on December 20. The breakdown of Church-Popular Action cooperation in the rural organization area has reportedly disillusioned even Dom Helder Câmara, Auxiliary Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, who had been one of its leading sponsors.

Clearly, the Church has decided that cooperation with the Marxist, theoretically non-Communist Popular Action is more likely to aid Communism than the Church.

For the Ambassador:

John Keppel  
Counselor for Political Affairs

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