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AIR POUCH

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Catholic Bishops Condemn Ação Popular

Rio's A-662, A-809

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A strongly worded draft letter signed by the regional directors of the Catholic National Confederation of Bishops has been circulating in church and political circles. The letter warns Catholic action leaders against association with leftist causes and organizations and specifically condemns Ação Popular, the extreme leftist group now in control of the National Student Unions (UNE) national directorate.

Though still in draft form, the letter represents a significant effort by an influential group of Bishops to prevent use by the extreme left of parts of the Church's apparatus and program. If the letter passes from draft to promulgation, it could reduce the effectiveness of Ação Popular and limit left-wing activities under the Church's banner.

Background

In the reference airgram the Embassy pointed out that the Catholic Church in Brazil has, in sum, been an ineffective force for the modernization of the Brazilian political and social process and will probably continue to be so for many reasons, including the lack of unified organization and the tendency of certain

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R. W. Dean/John Keppel

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Church elements to support and participate in machinations of the "negative left." Brazilian author Erico Verissimo has described the National Students' Union (JNB) as an alliance of the Church with the Communists.

Ação Popular (Popular Action), the extremist group which together with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) presently controls the JNB's national directorate, has been actively aided by a liaison with the Church and the infusion of members from the Catholic University Youth (JUC). This and other known alliances between at least some elements of the Church and the Communists have helped neutralize the Church's traditional anti-Communist political stance.

The Appearance of the Draft Letter

A draft letter opposing association of Church elements with leftist causes prepared by the regional directors of the National Confederation of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) appeared in the press on December 27. The document must have been given by one of the signatories to Deputy Cid Furtado (PDC-RS), who, prevented by an empty Chamber from delivering the letter to the Congress and guaranteeing to it wide publicity, had handed it to the press with considerably less effect. The text and a translation of the letter as it appeared in O Estado de São Paulo December 28 are attached.

Though the letter calls for adherence to "the authentic teachings and social doctrines of the Church" and warns against non-Christian doctrines, including "liberal capitalism," it is, in the main, a strong condemnation of Marxist ideology. It is addressed to Don Candido Padim, the Bishop in charge of the Brazilian Catholic Action and the JUC. It directs Don Candido to warn the leaders and members of Catholic Action against Marxist influence and to enjoin them against participating in Marxist fronts and organizations. Specifically, the Bishops all but forbid Catholic Action members joining the Ação Popular, which by implication is classified as a Marxist group. The indictment against AP is clear, "that movement, by its naturalistic orientation, does not represent authentic Christian thought and, in spite of its positive aspects in some dioceses, has caused serious harm in several others."

Possible Reasons for the Letter

Deputy Cid Furtado indicates that the Bishops, increasingly concerned over evidence of Marxist influence in Brazilian Church

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circles, decided in Rome during the Vatican Council to prepare such a letter. Certainly, the defeat of the Catholic slate by the Communists with Ação Popular support in the Rural Workers' Confederation (CONTAG) elections of December 20 contributed to the decision.

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With CONTAG in Communist hands, the existence of the Catholic rural unions would seem to be endangered or at least their possibilities for growth are limited. The Bishops were certain not to look with favor at the possible destruction of the rural unions which some of them had nurtured with great care.

Conclusions

The letter represents the assumption of an emphatic anti-Marxist position by an important group of influential Bishops. The seven signatory Bishops are leading prelates in their separate geographic areas. Their politics seem to vary from progressives like Don Fernando Gomez dos Santos of Colonia and Don Vincente Scherer of Porto Alegre to conservatives like Cardinal Jaime Camara of Rio de Janeiro.

But the signatories do not necessarily represent the thinking of other Bishops. Each Bishop is independent in his own diocese. The document does not carry either the name of the newly elected president of the CNBB, Cardinal Vasconcelos Mota, the senile Archbishop of São Paulo who cooperates with leftists and shares their views, or the Auxiliary Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro, Don Helder Camara, who wields much influence, often in leftist causes, from his post as Executive Secretary of the CNBB and through his self-made image as patron of the poor.

There are indications that the signing Bishops may be attempting to gain wider acceptance and promulgation for the document while circumventing the President and Executive Secretary of the CNBB. On January 9, O Estado de São Paulo called attention to a series of Episcopal regional conferences that are to be convened throughout

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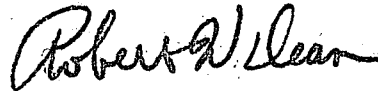
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the country. Also, on January 12, Cardinal Camara tried to bring further attention to the letter through a press release.

If the letter ever manages to pass from draft to wide acceptance by the majority of the hierarchy, it could reduce the effectiveness of the Ação Popular and may, "drain it of its membership." It may also affect other areas where Church groups have cooperated with the extreme left or where Church-backed institutions have been reportedly subverted by extremists, such as the Movement for Basic Education (M.B.E.). 1/

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For the Ambassador:



Robert W. Dean
Counselor of Embassy

enclosures:

As stated

1/ The day that this Airgram was being typed Jornal do Brasil carried a news item stating that Cardinal D. Jaime Camara's secretary had denied that the Cardinal knew anything about the draft letter. If true, this further points up the lack of coordination and unity among the Bishops and the slim chance the letter has of obtaining wide approval.

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TRANSLATION OF THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS LETTER CONDEMNING POPULAR ACTION (AÇÃO POPULAR) AS PRINTED IN "O ESTADO DE SÃO PAULO," December 27, 1963.

The below named Archbishops and Bishops, responsible for the regions of the National Confederation of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), manifest their full support and gratitude to Dom Candido Padim, General Assistant for Brazilian Catholic Action (ACB) and National Assistant for the Catholic University Students (JUC), for the efforts of the Lay Apostolate in the field and recognize that to assure the effectiveness of its performance, constant help is required from an Episcopate that is not just a spectator of victories and defeats but directly responsible at the head of Catholic Action. They are also fully confident that he reflects in the midst of the militant of Catholic Action, especially of the JUC, JEC and JIC, the thinking of the Episcopate and persistently and firmly asserts the rights of the hierarchy among its members.

The Archbishops and Bishops responsible for the regions of the National Confederation of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) ask Dom Candido Padim to oversee the carrying out of the following rules of conduct:

1. The ecclesiastical assistants of Catholic Action ought to reflect, in the way that they exercise their missions, the real mind of their Bishop. You (Dom Candido) ought to form the consciences of the militant in the authentic teachings of the Church and in its social doctrine and caution them against ideologies currently in vogue in the midst of the laity.

2. You ought to form the militant in the authentic Christian life, where there is a place for aims as a result of that mode of life. You ought to include in national and regional programs the Theology of Charity, to inspire and promote socially just solutions. You ought to maintain Catholic Action in the positive fight for the spread of the Gospel within the precepts of "Quaerite primum" and put forth a mentality that promotes the common good, not just pleading special causes but also remembering the more abandoned.

3. You ought to support the political vocation of the militant as a most efficient instrument of action in its own milieu, and expect of our Lay Apostles preferential help for the activities of the Church. Manifest to our assistants and the militant the preoccupation of the Bishops concerning Popular Action (Ação Popular). That movement, by its naturalistic

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orientation, does not represent authentic Christian thought and, in spite of its positive aspects in some dioceses, has caused serious harm in several others.

You ought to use effective means to demonstrate to the assistants and the militant the undesirability of entry of JUC members into the Popular Action (Ação Popular). You should support the participation of JUC in these movements in two circumstances:

- a) Elements especially called (vocacionado) to activity of this nature and who are well formed.
- b) Entrance with the intent of substantially modifying the Popular Action to an authentically Christian line.

4. You ought to urge upon all of Catholic Action loyalty to the social doctrine of the Church, especially in respect to the class struggle, disguised Marxist infiltrations and preoccupation with tactics.

5. You ought always to remain alert in meetings and publications to the mission of Catholic Action which is essentially apostolic, united to the hierarchy, represented by the Bishop. You ought to urge upon the assistants and the militant frequent and filial understandings with the Bishop and caution the laity against action unconnected to the hierarchy.

You ought to expound to the Bishops the necessity of contact with the laity, of communicating to the National Assistant the principal deficiencies in regional meetings, of taking prudent measures when they are necessary and not just ascertaining facts, of arranging for ecclesiastical assistants even when it requires sacrifices, of avoiding comments that might cause disagreeable impressions about the positions of other Bishops.

6. You ought to inform the militant of the high esteem that is due their efficient and generous apostolic work. The restrictions that have been made do not diminish the enthusiasm of the Bishops and the support that they give to the assistants and the militant. Correction is a form of Christian charity.

7. In the concrete circumstances in which we live, the Catholic militant and organizations ought not to enter into fronts with movements that follow Marxist doctrines or ideologies or those of liberal Capitalism. And in the same way, in accepting their support, we ought to have great prudence and

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avoid serving their purposes and tactics of infiltration. As to the fortuitous collaboration of persons in transitory circumstances, we are reminded of the fundamental principles of "Pacem in Terris". In necessary and personal positions, good formation and proper information become indispensable on the part of the militant so that they do not compromise on principles under the pretext of attaining power, especially with Marxist slates and other non-Christians. This orientation was presented to the Episcopal Commission of Catholic Action and the Lay Apostolate.

Signed by Vicente Scherer - Archbishop of Porto Alegre - Regional II; Fernando Gomes dos Santos - Archbishop of Goiânia - Central West Regional; João Rezende Costa - East Regional II; Agnelo Rossi - Archbishop of Ribeirão Preto - South Regional I; Alberto Ramos - Archbishop of Belém - North Regional; Eugenio de Araújo Sales - Northeast Regional; Cardinal Câmara approved the document for East I.

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PORTUGUESE TEXT OF DRAFT LETTER OF THE REGIONAL DIRECTORS
OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF BISHOPS OF BRAZIL

"Os arcebispos e bispos responsáveis pelos Regionais da CNBB, abaixo especificados, manifestam ao exmo. assistente geral da ACB e assistente nacional da JUC, D. Candido Padim, seu inteiro apôio e gratidão pelo esforço no campo do Apostolado Leigo, reconhecem, para garantia e eficácia de sua atuação, necessitar de constante ajuda do Episcopado que não deve ser espectador de vitórias e desvios, mas responsável direto como mandatário da AC; confiam plenamente que ele reflita no meio dos militantes da AC, especialmente JUC, JEC, JIC, o pensamento do Episcopado e faça, presente mas firmemente, valer as diretrizes da Hierarquia junto aos seus mandatados.

Os arcebispos e bispos responsáveis pelos regionais da Confederação Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil (CNBB) pedem a D. Candido Padim velar pela concretização das seguintes diretrizes:

1 - Os assistentes eclesiais da AC devem refletir, no meio em que exercem essa sua função, o pensamento real do Ordinário. Formar a consciência dos militantes no ensino autêntico da Igreja e de sua doutrina social. Acautelar-se com certas correntes ideológicas em voga nos meios do laicato.

2 - Formar os militantes na autêntica vida cristã, onde ha lugar para a esmola, resultado dessa vivência. Incluir nos programas nacionais e regionais a Teologia da Caridade, inspiradora e promotora de soluções da Justiça Social. Manter a AC na luta positiva pela difusão do Evangelho, dentro do "Quaerite primum". Fazer valer uma mentalidade promotora do Bem Comum e não apenas reivindicatoria, embora sem esquecer os mais desamparados.

3 - Apoiar a vocação política de militantes como instrumento de ação mais eficiente em seu próprio meio. Esperar de nossos apóstolos leigos a ajuda preferencial às iniciativas da Igreja. Manifestar a nossos assistentes e militantes a preocupação dos bispos pela Ação Popular. Esse movimento, pela sua orientação naturalista, não representa o pensamento cristão autêntico e tem, ao lado dos aspectos positivos em algumas dioceses, causado sérios prejuízos em várias outras.

Usar de meios eficazes junto aos assistentes e militantes para mostrar a inoportunidade de ingresso de jecistas na AP.

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Apoiar a participação de jucistas nesses movimentos em duas circunstâncias: a) elemento vocacionado para atividade dessa natureza e bem formado; b) ingresso com intuito de modificar substancialmente a AP para uma linha cristã autêntica".

DOCTRINA SOCIAL DA IGREJA

"4 - Insistir com tãda a AC na lealdade à Doutrina Social da Igreja, especialmente no que se refere a luta de classes, disfarçadas infiltrações marxistas e a preocupação tática.

5 - Manter sempre viva nas reuniões e publicações a missão da AC, essencialmente apostólica, unida à hierarquia representada pelo Ordinário. Insistir com os assistentes e militantes no frequente e filial entendimento com o bispo. Acautelar o leigo da ação desligada da hierarquia.

Expor aos bispos a ~~uma~~ necessidade imperiosa do contacto com o laicato, de comunicar ao assistente nacional as deficiências principalmente em reuniões regionais, de tomar providências prudentes quando se fizerem necessárias e não apenas constatar fatos, de providenciar assistentes eclesiásticos, mesmo com sacrifícios, de evitar comentários que possam provocar impressões desagradáveis sobre posições de outros bispos.

6 - Informar os militantes sobre o alto conceito em que é tido o eficiente e generoso trabalho apostólico que exercem. As restrições feitas não diminuem o entusiasmo dos bispos e o apôio que dão aos assistentes e militantes. A correção é uma forma de caridade cristã.

7 - Nas circunstâncias concretas em que vivemos, os militantes e organizações católicas não devem entrar em frente única com movimentos que surgem de doutrina ou ideologia marxista ou capitalista liberal. E mesmo para receber apôio deve haver a maior prudência a fim de evitar que sirvamos à infiltração de seus propósitos e táticas. Quanto à colaboração fortuita de pessoas em circunstâncias transitórias, lembramos os princípios da "Pacem in Terris". Nas imprescindíveis e pessoais posições táticas torna-se indispensável uma boa formação e conveniente informação por parte de nossos militantes para não virem a transigir em questão de princípios, a pretexto da conquista do poder, maxime em chapas marxistas e outras não cristãs. Essa orientação foi apresentada à Comissão Episcopal de Ação Católica e Apostolado dos Leigos.

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(aa) Vicente Scherer - Arcebispo de Porto Alegre - Regional II;
Fernando Gomes dos Santos - Arcebispo de Goiânia - Regional
Centro Oeste; João Rezende Costa - Regional Leste II; Agnelo
Rossi - Arcebispo de Ribeirão Preto - Regional Sul I; Alberto
Ramos - Arcebispo de Belem - Regional Norte; Eugenio de
Araujo Sales - Adm. Apostólico de Natal - Regional Nordeste.
Sua eminência o Cardeal Câmara aprovou o documento para
Regional Leste I".

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