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Department of State  
AMERICAN EMBASSY  
BRASILIA, BRAZIL  
Info: Amembassy Rio de Janeiro  
Amembassy Brasilia

Amconsul SAO PAULO

November 3, 1970

Accusations Against Dom Helder Câmara, Archbishop of  
Olinda and Recife  
Rio de Janeiro's telegram 7337

It will be recalled that the Governor of São Paulo, Roberto de Abreu Sodrê, on returning from Europe a month ago made some very uncomplimentary comments indeed to the press concerning Dom Helder Câmara, the itinerant and highly controversial Archbishop of Olinda and Recife. Apparently the Governor came back in a state of high pique consequent to the atmosphere of misunderstanding and hostility to Brazil he encountered in some quarters in Western Europe, notably in youth and journalistic circles. It was in this frame of mind, and in the belief that Dom Helder on frequent visits to the Continent had contributed to the distorted image of his country that he saw reflected there, that the Governor lashed out at the Archbishop, charging him with being at the service of the Communist propaganda machine and calling him, inter alia, a "Fidel Castro in cassock".

Dom Agnelo Cardinal Rossi, Archbishop of São Paulo, both as ecclesiastical head in the locale where the Governor spoke out and as President of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops, felt impelled to confront the Governor, in the good name of the Church as well as of Dom Helder. He thereupon, on the eve of a trip to Rome where (although it was not yet publicly known) he was to be appointed by Pope Paul VI as a member of the Curia, personally visited the Governor and delivered a letter pointing to the gravity of the Governor's charges. In the interests of justice the Cardinal asked for "proofs" of the allegations and for a chance for Dom Helder, the accused, to defend himself. At the same time he gave a copy of his letter to the Governor to the press which disseminated it widely. The Governor told the Cardinal he would have an answer for him when the Cardinal returned from Rome later in the month.

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Shortly after the Cardinal's return from Rome, about two weeks later, the Governor personally called on him and handed him his reply to the Cardinal's letter. He also gave it to the press. Set out below, in informal translation, is the text of the Governor's self-explanatory reply to the Cardinal as published in the October 24 issue of "O Estado de São Paulo" under the headline "Sodre Supports His Accusations of Dom Helder."

"São Paulo, 21 October, 1970.

Your Eminence: Upon receiving at my residence, on the eve of your departure for Rome, your Most Reverend Eminence's visit, which especially honored me, I informed you that soon after your return I would go to you personally, if this were agreeable to Your Eminence, to give you a written response to your letter of the 7th of this month, of public knowledge, relating to declarations to the press, which I made and confirm, about the anti-patriotic preaching abroad of His Excellency, The Most Reverend Dom Helder Câmara.

Your Excellency asks me for "proofs" of the declarations which were transcribed in your letter, asking at the same time "the right of defense for the accused".

The "Right of Defense" is fully assured for Dom Helder Câmara, not by me but by prevailing Brazilian law which he can use any time he so desires.

The proofs--which would be unnecessary, in the case in question, or which could be produced only with difficulty for one is dealing with facts about which one rarely obtains direct and irrefutable proof, as was immediately noted in numerous newspaper and magazine articles commenting on the request with which Your Excellency honored me, many of them signed by the most renowned persons among our journalists and intellectuals--these proofs Your Excellency will find in abundance, not only in the 55 annexes which accompany this letter but even in logical reasoning as simple as it is irrefutable.

According to your letter, Your Eminence wants proof of my declarations that "Dom Helder Câmara belongs to the propaganda machine

of the Communist Party<sup>o</sup>, <sup>o</sup>receiving, traveling and being subsidized for this<sup>o</sup> and <sup>o</sup>not doing anything except denigrating Brazil abroad<sup>o</sup>.

Now, according to an old Latin maxim, current to this day in the judiciary world, the first inquiry to make when investigating a fact is to ask: Whom does it benefit? <sup>o</sup>Cui prodest?<sup>o</sup> We apply the maxim to the renowned Archbishop of Olinda and Recife. Who profits from the intense preaching abroad of Dom Helder Câmara? Who gains from this? By chance does it benefit Brazil? What is the principal if not the only beneficiary of the demoralization of our country before the nations of the western world? Who profits from the attacks on the Brazilian regime which opposed the communist escalade in 1964?

Who is served by this declaration of Dom Helder Câmara, printed in <sup>o</sup>Workers<sup>o</sup> Mission<sup>o</sup>, No. 4 Year II, page 48: <sup>o</sup>- - and the Communist Party was the first to cry out in favor of the workers/in practice it is the one most dedicated to the workers<sup>o</sup> fight. We condemn the Communist Party because it is atheistic, subversive and fights against unjust structures. We forget that the Communists are our brothers and our samaritan brothers. Actually workers are attacked by the capitalist structure and who is most interested in defending them? It is the Communist Party. Aren<sup>o</sup>t the Communists the samaritans of today? These are the values of the P.C. we are ignorant of--this great spirit of struggle, this dedication to the working class. It is an evangelical value that I was unaware of and it is cause for joy to have them as comrades in battle.<sup>o</sup> (Annex No. 1)

Who is favored by this other declaration of His Most Reverend Excellency: <sup>o</sup>But I don<sup>o</sup>t say this to discourage the young people who are trying to obtain the freedom of our people. I love them and pursue the same objective. They are admirable, these urban guerillas.<sup>o</sup> (Interview in <sup>o</sup>L<sup>o</sup>Express<sup>o</sup>, translated by <sup>o</sup>O Estado de São Paulo<sup>o</sup> of July 5, 1970.) (Annex No. 2)?

Who is aided by a statement like this: <sup>o</sup>How long will Latin America go on accepting the imposition of having her sister Cuba excommunicated? Those who rose up in Cuba only wished to see Cuba brought up from underdevelopment and misery.<sup>o</sup> (Conference given by Dom Helder Câmara in São Paulo, June 19, 1967, and transcribed in his book <sup>o</sup>Revolução dentro da Paz<sup>o</sup>, page 65 --- Annex No. 3).

Many other manifestations of an identical tenor could be cited. I shall not do so in order not to lengthen this letter unnecessarily and because Your Eminence will easily find them among the 55 annexes.

Whom do all of them benefit? There is but one answer and it is obvious.

Now, if they who profit from the anti-Brazilian campaign of Dom Helder Câmara are the Communist Party and communists of current diverse tendencies, be they Soviets, Castroites or Maoists, it seems incontestable that the famous Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, whether he likes it or not, deliberately or not, is found to be at the service of the propaganda machine of the Communist Party. It is not at all strange, then, that the same press which favors and supports him, giving profuse publicity to his frequent pronouncements, qualifies him as *l'évêque rouge* (the "red bishop") (Annex No. 4) or describes him as *l'uomo d'assalto, il trombettiere della Chiesa di sinistra* (the forward attack man, the trumpeter of the Church of the Left) (Annexes Nos. 5 & 6. Page 64).

Besides, if Dom Helder Câmara himself confesses that his innumerable trips and visits abroad are financed by various foreign organizations ---as Your Eminence was good enough to inform me, attaching to your letter circulars indicating the relationships of these entities---it would seem to be beyond doubt that His Most Reverend Excellency receives, travels and is subsidized to make the anti-Brazilian propaganda to which he is presently dedicated.

I ask the indulgence of Your Eminence as a Pastor for the public discussion of this question which, for a long time, has been tormenting my conscience as a Catholic and wounding my sensibility as a Brazilian; the omnipresence of Dom Helder speaking, gesticulating, inciting the foreign press against his country (Annexes Nos. 6 to 15); publishing books and articles in publishing houses of other countries, some notoriously Communist, others not (Annexes Nos. 3, 6, 8 & 9), lecturing in and to the most heterogeneous forums and audiences, now arranged by Communists, now by respectable Catholic organizations which are certainly deceived, other times by avowedly leftist groups (Annexes from Nos. 10 to 15); agitating peoples of other lands by radio and television, in sensationalist programs or even in publications of disgraceful sexual exploitation. Forgive me, Your Eminence, but to give witness to what I have just said, I could enclose a Danish periodical in which an interview of Dom Helder

appears between texts and photographs of shocking immorality, but which will be at the disposition of whomever Your Eminence should send to examine it should you wish.

In his abundance of personal publicity which, by the way, he exploits with a rare sense of opportunism, His Most Reverend Excellency always tells his readers and listeners that Brazil is an enormous prison where political prisoners are systematically tortured (Annex No. 17); where misery is endemic and degrading; where the military seize power for power's sake; where murderous terrorism, as His Most Reverend Excellency says textually, "merits respect" (Annex No. 17); where the Catholic Church itself is torn asunder by dissension (Annexes 18 to 25); where no attention whatsoever is paid to the appreciable effort toward social, educational or economic development of the Brazilian people.

Isn't this denigrating to Brazil, calumniously denigrating?

Your Excellency asked me for proofs. Here they are,

I request permission now respectfully to remind you that notorious facts have already been proven, years ago, by daily, country-wide newspapers, radio, TV and magazine stories and comments, in a very systematic, insistent and ferocious anti-Brazilian campaign (Annexes 26 to 54). And as Your Eminence, a distinguished canonist, very well knows, a notorious fact does not require proof, according to a general principle of law, which is expressly covered in the Code of Canon Law: "Non indigent probatione facta notoria."

Anguishing inquiries which I repeatedly make to myself I now come before Your Most Reverend Eminence to ask: Why, among almost 300 Bishops of our Catholic Church and among many men in public life, writers, intellectuals, the latter recognized opponents of the actual government, is Dom Helder Câmara the one chosen to receive so many invitations to travel? So many that, as he himself has confessed, he is obliged to select annually, and without modesty, only four of them?

Prince of the Church that you are, Pastor of one of the largest dioceses in the world, example of ascension from humble origin to the rank of Cardinal, does Your Most Reverend Eminence receive as many invitations as Dom Helder for lectures, interviews and discussions

abroad? Would Your Eminence and the other illustrious members of the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy be less worthy representatives of our country and of our religion, of our people and of our aspirations? Or are the invitations not sent to you because you would not lend yourselves to the sad role that Dom Helder Câmara goes on playing abroad?

Or is it because Your Eminence, in your memorable Easter sermon this year, has already anathematized this crime of injury to Brazil (lesa-Brazil) with the following words which I hereby faithfully transcribe:

"The internationally organized slander pains my soul, representing a false and disfigured image of our Brazil. We have been accustomed to the presentation of the Brazilian reality only in its negative aspects, which are true but are not unique. But, now, our detractors have moved forward and speak, in this century of social communications, with an effrontery and impudence stemming from, we don't know which to blame more, pure maliciousness or unlimited ignorance. To say, for example, in newspapers of a civilized European country, that 200,000 Indians are being massacred in Brazil and that among us a religious persecution is in force comparable to that of the worst times of Stalin, is, frankly I do not know which, either an offense against us or against the framers and spreaders of such nonsense themselves." (Annex No. 55)

His Excellency the Archbishop of Recife and Olinda proclaims himself herald of the "Third World", that of the underdeveloped peoples.

But Your Eminence, why is he given such unequalled prominence?

Are there not in the so-called "Third World"--in Asia, Africa, Latin America--authoritative voices of the Prelates of the Catholic Church, of politicians, writers and professors, who merit, as much as Dom Helder, the profusion of invitations for such trips, conferences, meetings and interviews? Or is it that if invited, they would refuse to defame their country?

Or do they not lend themselves, in a consent that leaves us perplexed, to being possessed by the machinery of international Communism----

radio, television, publishing houses, auditoria, newspapers and magazines--to defame their country.

It is the Very Reverend Eminence Cardinal Rossi himself who says the following to explain the intentions of the defamatory campaign against Brazil: "This campaign is against the transformation of Brazil which is emerging as a giant, which is not an insignificant little republic but, yes, a colossus on the rise."

Yes, Cardinal Rossi, it is this colossus on the rise that is attacked, and the anti-Brazilian preaching of Dom Helder is paid for (tickets, hotels, auditoriums, books, magazines, interviews, television, meetings). Your Very Reverend Eminence, we all know and the Communists know that in the so-called "Third World" and especially in Latin America, the target is Brazil. To impede our social, political and economic development is to assure ideal conditions in the Hemisphere for Communist subversion. Subversion whose first and most obvious victim would be, inevitably, the Catholic Church and, consequently, the people of the largest Catholic nation in the world. Moreover, the radicalization of some militants in our Church in one position--that of the left--will generate the radicalization of others of the right, both equally erroneous and harmful.

Your Eminence knows that the current Governor of São Paulo, as head of the State in which lies the Ecclesiastical province of which Your Eminence is the distinguished chief, maintains relations of respect and of scrupulous obedience to our laws and traditions. And everything has been done, with the cooperation of Your Eminence and within the constitutional limits of their respective obligations, so that in São Paulo State and Church do not conflict. Never, as a public servant and an active politician, have I been a reactionary. I am, rather, a democrat who professes the primacy of the social in the modern world, who respects ideas and, as Governor, has assured everyone the right to express theirs.

As a Catholic and as a Brazilian, however, I have the right to be indignant over the constant anti-Brazilian attitudes of Dom Helder Câmara who, be it admitted, Your Eminence has already made clear, does not have the authority to speak in the name of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil.

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Since my youth, Your Eminence, I have followed the evolution of the personality of Dom Helder.

Yesterday, considering inevitable the advent of the "Nazi millenium", His Excellency was the advocate of Hitler to the youth of that day (Annex No. 55). From the then young priest, one never heard any condemnation of the genocide at Dachau, Treblinka, Sobibor, or Buchenwald, where millions of Jews, Catholics and Christians were incinerated in gas chambers. Still without historic perspective and thus today believing in the inevitability of totalitarian socialism, he is the implacable defamer of the democratic Western World and, as part of it, of Brazil, and the lenient critic of totalitarian materialism. (Annex No. 9, page 27).

I have never known him to utter any vehement condemnation of the slave camps behind the Iron Curtain, of the religious persecutions of which Cardinals Stepinac and Mindszenty are shattering examples.

This is the constant and coherent make-up of his totalitarian personality, served by an acute sense of opportunism. What hurts in this case, to use an expression of Your Eminence, is to see a Brazilian-- a bad Brazilian--who has received everything from his country, vilify his country with such fervor and do it disservice with an obstinacy of which only fanatics are capable.

To conclude this letter, which should have been brief but could not be, I ask permission to attach hereto the 55 documents cited in the text. These are magazines, Communist and non-Communist; they are newspapers, official organs of Communism and of other political currents; they are books of publishers engaged in the totalitarian campaign against Brazil.

And here I bring to an end the task Your Eminence called on me to do. I would not have reverted to this matter--which disturbs and displeases me--if it had not been for your request. And I do not intend to revert to it again, for to insist in the matter would be to serve the publicity purposes of Dom Helder Câmara.

From this disagreeable episode, my only consolation is a cordial dialogue with Your Eminence to whom I renew the assurance of my filial respect. <sup>00</sup>

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Comment: A number of substantial Brazilians I have talked to after Mass on Sundays believe the Cardinal led with his chin (or "the Church's" or Dom Helder's). They also believe the Governor had some help in preparing his answer.

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November 3, 1970

**CORRIGAN**

Accusations Against Dom Agostino Casaroli, Archbishop of Olinda and Recife  
Re: de Lencastre's telegram

It will be recalled that the Governor of São Paulo, Roberto de Abreu Sobrê, on returning from Europe a month ago made some very complimentary comments indeed to the press concerning Dom Helder Câmara, the litigant and highly controversial Archbishop of Olinda and Recife. Apparently the Governor came back in a state of high spirits consequent to the atmosphere of misunderstanding and hostility to Brazil he encountered in some quarters in Western Europe, notably in youth and journalistic circles. It was in this frame of mind, and in the belief that Dom Helder on frequent visits to the Continent had contributed to the distorted image of his country that he saw reflected there, that the Governor lashed out at the Archbishop, charging him with being at the service of the Communist propaganda machine and calling him, inter alia, a "Fidel Castro in cassock".

Dom Agostino Cardinal Rossi, Archbishop of São Paulo, both as viceroyal head in the locale where the Governor spoke out and as President of the National Council of Brazilian Bishops, felt impelled to confront the Governor, in the good name of the Church as well as of Dom Helder. As the result, on the eve of a trip to Rome where (although it was not yet publicly known) he was to be appointed by Pope Paul VI as a member of the Curia, personally visited the Governor and delivered a letter pointing to the gravity of the Governor's charges. In the interests of justice the Cardinal asked for "proofs" of the allegations and for a chance for Dom Helder, the accused, to defend himself. At the same time he gave a copy of his letter to the press which disseminated it widely. The Governor told the Cardinal he would have an answer for him when the Cardinal returned from Rome later in the month.

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