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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

INFO: Amembassy, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia
Amcongen, Recife

Amconsulate, SALVADOR

March 20, 1964

Declaration of the Bishops of Bahia

On March 6 at the conclusion of a three day meeting in Salvador, the bishops of the archdiocese of Bahia issued a declaration which:

1. Gives full support to the Ecumenical Council;
2. Calls attention to the shortage of priests (the most crucial problem in the archdiocese) and says that state and federal assistance for the seminaries is needed;
3. Condemns the advance of communism in the country.

With regard to the third point, the bishops recognize that many things in Brazil need to be changed, among them: social injustice, the high cost of living, maldistribution of wealth, corruption in political life, and the predominance of "secondary and criminal" interests over the "true interests of the people". They suggest that public opinion has been weak and inactive until the present. Now, however, there is no time for neutralism and cowardliness and if necessary the people must be willing "to take to the trenches" in order to ensure their right to speak out against the communist menace. Elsewhere the tone of the declaration is more pacific and calls for a return to basic Christian attitudes of self-respect, humbleness (pudor), justice and charity as a requisite for the solution of the nation's problems.

Harold M. Midkiff
American Consul

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