

**Relações de trabalho, Igreja Católica e direitos na zona canavieira
de Pernambuco: organização e mobilização de trabalhadores
rurais no regime militar**

**Labor relations, Catholic Church and rights in the sugarcane
zone of Pernambuco: organization and mobilization of rural
workers in the military regime**

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Abstract: This paper aims at discussing the relationship between mobilizations of rural workers and the Catholic Church in the sugarcane zone of Pernambuco. The period covered spans from the beginning of the Church's interest in the rural areas relations, with the institutional renewal promoted by the Second Vatican Council and the Medellin Conference, to the repression of the institution by the military regime with the monitoring and persecution of members of the Church in defense of justice, dignity and rights of civil society, especially of the workers in Brazil. In order to carry out this analysis, we begin from the historiographical discussion and the crossing of sources provided by the Church, by means of communication and by the Information Services of the 1964 authoritarian regime.

Keywords: Rural workers, Church, Dictatorship

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Introduction

This paper aims at discussing the relationship between mobilizations of rural workers and the Catholic Church in the sugarcane zone of Pernambuco in search of staking their claims and enjoying their rights in the countryside during the repression by the 1964 civil-military coup¹. The movements of the rural workers' organization in the Northeast of Brazil faced several representation disputes between the Catholic Church, civil associations, peasant leagues and political parties. In order to understand these workers' mobilization possibilities, we aim at analyzing documentations produced in this fighting for rights and staking claims scenario. Thus, we used the cross-referencing of documental sources collected in the *Regional Nordeste II* archives of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil, national and international press newspapers, interviews with members of rural trade-union assistance teams and NIS funds in the National Archives on the Rural Orientation Service of Pernambuco.

The study on the political organization forms of the workers in the countryside, their relationship with the Communist Party, with the Leagues and with the federal and state government in Pernambuco is carried out by several authors discussing the 1950s and the 1960s². The peasant leagues emerged in an agricultural economic boost scenario in the state of Pernambuco. Such modernization in the countryside production techniques focused on strengthening the agricultural industry community by means of increasing the productivity with no improvement whatsoever of worker's quality of life. As the exploitation of the rural workers intensified, it resulted in mobilization in the countryside countering strong repression by means of violence and perversity of the big landowners

¹ This article is part of the debate that took place at the 44th Cycle of *Conférences of the Fondation Maison du Brésil* - "Approches historiques et sociologiques sur le travail, les mouvements sociaux et l'Église Catholique au Brésil", Paris, 2018.

² See: AZEVEDO, Fernando. *As Ligas Camponesas*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982. AUED, Bernadete Wrublesvski. *A vitória dos vencidos: Partido Comunista Brasileiro e Ligas Camponesas 1955-1964*. Florianópolis: UFSC, 1986. MONTENEGRO, Antônio Torres. *Ligas Camponesas e Sindicatos Rurais em tempo de revolução*. In: DELGADO, Lucilia de Almeida Neves; FERREIRA, Jorge (Org.). *O Brasil republicano. O tempo da experiência democrática: da democratização de 1945 ao golpe civil-militar de 1964*. V.03. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2003. PEREIRA, Anthony. *O declínio das Ligas Camponesas e a ascensão dos sindicatos*. Clio. PPGH / UFPE, Recife: University Ed. of UFPE, 2009. STEIN, Leila Menezes. *A construção do Sindicato de Trabalhadores Agrícolas no Brasil (1954-1964)*. Doctorate Thesis. IFCH - Unicamp, 1997.

The Leagues and political parties in the rural workers organization

The first Peasant Leagues had their historical background in 1945 under the Communist Party organization. They adopted a legal form of association to avoid political and bureaucratic difficulties that they were facing to implement unions in the countryside. The 1944 Decree n. 7.038 authorized the formation of rural unions; however, this legal mechanism was not implemented due to great resistance from the rural landowners and the absence of mobilization in the rural communities' political organization. Until 1955, the Ministry of Labor had only acknowledged 5 rural unions in the whole country. The Rural Union of Campos, acknowledged in 1933 – the first in the country; The Rural Union of Barreiros' Plant, acknowledged in 1954; two unions in São Paulo and one in Bahia (AZEVEDO, 1982). In this scenario, the Leagues funded by the Communist Party put in efforts to become unions, countering the resistance of the big landowners and the refusal of the Ministry of Labor (AZEVEDO, 1982, p.56). Most part of those entities were disjointed and extinguished after the nullification of the Communist Party in 1947, facing repression from the large landowners' private polices.

The Agricultural and Livestock Society of Planters of Pernambuco was funded in 1955 by the farmers of the Galiléia Mill aiming to raise a mutual aid fund for use in times of need, such as in the deathbed³. In such times, the farmers had to appeal to the city hall for a common casket that had to be returned after the burial (PORFÍRIO, 2009, p.23). The farmers' association aimed to bypass the shame of having to turn to the city hall to bury their deceased. The way they would be buried was one of the biggest concerns in life for the rural population⁴.

The *First Congress of Pernambuco Peasants* was organized by the SAPPP and it gathered around 3 thousand rural workers. The organization had a large coverage by the local press, raising the visibility of the rural workers' mobilization for better living conditions. The Agricultural and Livestock Society of the Planters of Pernambuco (SAPPP) was born as a charity association and was eventually known as Peasant Leagues.

³ The Galiléia Mill is located in *Vitória de Santo Antão*, this city is approximately 50 km from Recife, the capital of Pernambuco. Look for: MONTENEGRO, Antonio. *Ligas Camponesas e Sindicatos Rurais em tempo de revolução*. In: DELGADO, Lucilia de Almeida Neves; FERREIRA, Jorge (Org.). *O Brasil republicano. O tempo da experiência democrática: da democratização de 1945 ao golpe civil-militar de 1964*. v. 03. Rio de Janeiro: *Civilização Brasileira*, 2003.

⁴ In MONTENEGRO, Antonio Torres. *Ligas Camponesas e Sindicatos Rurais em tempo de revolução*. In this book Montenegro tells Father Jaime Le Boyer a story about a woman who stayed at the parochial house. She was a lonely drifter in the Brazilian Sertão, but she always hid some money money in a strand with San Francisco figure, so she could pay for her burial and not die as a Jane doe.

The press names the SAPPP as Peasant Leagues in reference to the former Leagues organized by the Communist Party. To associate the Society to the communist organization was an attempt by the press to turn the public opinion against the SAPPP⁵. This communist party influence was also discussed in the Leagues origins by Bernardet Aued (1986), showing research of Sapé and action in Paraíba. Since the beginning of the 1950s, the Communist Party was trying to reorganize their connections in the countryside and to recreate the former Leagues under new titles. However, the term was embraced by the Agricultural and Livestock Society and new Leagues with larger mobilization settle themselves in other cities.

In an interview to the *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper in August 8th 1961, Zezé da Galiléia explained the role of the funeral fund paying the burial expenses and providing dignity: “You see, before, when one of us died, the casket was borrowed from the city hall. Then the body was taken to the mass grave and the casket would be returned to the city hall warehouse. Today, the funeral is covered by the League, and the casket is buried with the body”⁶.

Established as associative entities, the Leagues would take the place that were denied to the trade unions of intervening in favor of the workers in the capital/work in the countryside relationship – due to the fact the owners of plants and mills had so much political control in Pernambuco. According to Montenegro, the Ministry of Labor was pushed by the Brazilian Rural Confederation to block:

any action that would allow the gaining in the countryside of the labor rights already achieved in the cities. The rural unionization, in spite of being defined by the Consolidation of The Labor Laws – following the terms of the 1946 Constitution and announced as the goal of several governments – was blocked by the rural politicians’ power. (MONTENEGRO, 2003, p.253-254).

With the local police and justice being handled by the large landowners, the workers had few possibilities for effective resistance. The search for legal and political support for the established Society could increase the possibilities and chances in the fight of the workers of the Galiléia Mill.

⁵ On the communist influence, Fernando de Azevedo points out in “As Ligas Camponesas”, that the formation and constitution of the first board of SAPPP was comprised of militants of the 1940s old rural associations, such as Paulo Travassos (then Zezé da Galiléia) as the president, Osvaldo Lisboa, Severino de Souza and Romildo José as secretaries, and José dos Prazeres as Sthe ocial Officer. AZEVEDO, A. *As Ligas Camponesas*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982.

⁶ National Library – *O Estado de São Paulo* newspaper, 08/08/1961.

To amplify the resistance, they needed to expose the repression they faced to the press and to the legislative branch. SAPP's directory went to Recife aiming at making connections and providing support to the fight they were starting. The actual meeting takes place at the assemblyman Francisco Julião's house. He greeted the rural workers and begins to legally assist them in defending their interests. At the same time, a cross-party committee was being organized with assemblymen from PSB, UDN, PDT, PST e PCB – they were going to integrate the SAPP Regional Counsel to report Galiléia Mill's situation in the Alepe's tribunes and to the press. That would prevent the repression to be intensified in the Mill (PAGE, 1972). Francisco Julião was establishing SAPP's statute and registering SAPP as a civil association – and he was going to be their lawyer. Usually, the rural conflicts were published at the crime section in the biggest newspapers in the state. The rural and peasant issue was handled as police matter – as the working class was handled in Brazil in the beginning of the twentieth century. In this regard, the cross-party committee, which gathered members of almost every opposition party, had an important role in the conflictual scenario because it exposed the struggle between peasants and landowners, and converted it into political events.

The agrarian issue experiences an important turn in its political approach with the reassessment of drought as geographic fatalism. Then, it puts the regional inequity debate established by the social relationships in the countryside in the spotlight. This intense political transformation period in the state was also a rural mobilization burst, both the Leagues' performance and the attempts to build extralegal rural unions had to deal with the repression against struggle movements and associations in the countryside.

The Leagues had an organizational structure set from the city to the countryside, by means of the coordination with urban sectors connecting their members and political activists. The structure had a hierarchized organization until 1963, when it faced an internal crisis for political and ideological strife. The movement lost its hegemony in the countryside for the rural unionization mobilized by the communist party and the Church (AZEVEDO, 1972, p.78).

The Catholic Church and rural workers in the Northeast of Brazil

The mobilization of the Catholic Church due to the rural workers' conditions in the Northeast begins with the set of actions introduced by Bishop Eugênio Sales of Rio Grande do Norte. During the Northeast's socio-political movement, the bishop of Natal stands out with his idea of a modernizing and reformist Catholicism, following the new strategies of the National Conference of Bishops, by launching his diocese in a first campaign of rural unionization (MARIN, 1992, p. 92).

Richard Marin emphasizes the Catholic Church awareness after being pressured by social movements, and the Rome and governments recommendations in the 1940s and 1950s, turning their attention to the condition of the man in the rural area, and following the social reforms agenda. Religious appeals focused on the rural community by pointing out that the Church had already "lost" the urban workers and it could not "commit the folly of also losing the rural workers"⁷.

Dom Eugênio Sales had founded the Rural Assistance Service in the 1950s as an organization that carried out education and health programs in the countryside and initiated the first mobilizations of workers' organization in rural unions. The Rural Assistance Service – SAR declared itself free of any political connections, but according to Page, it was anti-communist and did not aim at radical changes in the socioeconomic structure of the countryside. The path chosen by the unions considered by the SAR was to aid in the defense of rural labor rights and to adopt of a piecemeal agrarian reform (PAGE, 1972). However, the countryside condition of Rio Grande do Norte were not the same as the one of Pernambuco. In the sugarcane zone of Pernambuco, the performance of Francisco Julião and the Peasant Leagues drew the attention of the Church. The priests considered to be more conservative maintained the Church's link to the great landowners, backing denunciations against communism in the countryside. However, younger priests considered to be progressive, influenced by the encyclical of Pope John XXIII, understood the need for a more active approach in the countryside and for it to be closer to the workers.

Some of these priests have gotten to know the performance of the SAR in Rio Grande do Norte in person and returned to Pernambuco influenced by such experience. In 1961, the Pernambuco priests held a series of meetings in the Jaboatão parish church to discuss the political turmoil in the sugarcane zone. The foundation of Christian leagues is denied for being associated with Julião's experience and due to the limitations they already had.

⁷ Bishop Engelke's speech - MARIN (1995). The recommendations affected the CNBB, which was launched in an attempt to reconquer the rural communities. The Confederation attended the meeting with government leaders and Juscelino Kubitschek in the elaboration of an economic development project in the Northeast region.

The Fathers came to the agreement that the creation of rural unions would be the most effective way of dealing with the of the countryside turmoil issues (MARIN, 1992, p.94). The young priests of Pernambuco believed that the organization of a rural labor movement established according to the legal framework could counteract the forces that Julião had triggered in the Northeastern countryside. At that moment, there were only five rural unions acknowledge in Brazil. They got legal authorization and believed in unionization as an effective means of mobilizing peasants. According to Marin (1992), the possibility of organizing the State federations and national confederations encouraged the structuring of the movement focused on greater effectiveness and, aiming at this, they began to mobilize the workers' organization.

The priest's movement was structurally and judicially established under a body called SORPE – Rural Orientation Service of Pernambuco. Two priests had important records in this mobilization according to the workers' organization: Father Melo and Father Crespo. Father Melo was considered by some historians as a chief, the interpreter of the peasants; while Father Crespo was considered as the real brain behind the operation.

The Orientation Service of Pernambuco was designed by the Catholic Church based on the experience with the SAR in Rio Grande do Norte. SORPE aimed at finding peasant leaders and training them in Christian syndicalism. In one of the interviews given by a member of SORPE's team in the 1960s and 1970s, we were able to see the efforts to train future union leaders in the countryside by means of organized meetings and courses throughout the state, offered by teams set by the Church to gather and joint rural workers⁸. In her recollections, the educational adviser recalls the trips to Pernambuco's countryside in the dioceses, gathering rural workers and teaching courses ranging from adult literacy practices to awareness about the countryside work and the importance of unionization. The interviewee described the making of information materials at Rua Giriquiti, n. 48 – the address of SORPE's headquarters in downtown Recife. The booklets and panels made were used and distributed at workplaces in rural areas. The reference to the "educational action" in the countryside has great impact when the interviewee brings back her recollections. Basic education to establish a Christian structure by means of the syndicalism⁹ was the foundation of SORPE. The chosen leaders were trained to organize unions that would follow the SORPE guidelines, avoiding direct conflicts between workers and landowners, in the search for a mediation of this relationships configuration in the countryside aiming at claiming labor rights:

⁸Interview held on 07/20/2018 with one of the lecturers of SORPE training courses.

the new unions looked for well-balanced solutions to the differences between peasants and landowners, and between sugarcane workers and mill owners as a preferable alternative to class conflict. They would also encourage the formation of cooperatives as well as the provision of legal and other necessary services as a means of improving the peasants' conditions (PAGE, 1972, p. 185).

In DOPS-PE IV Army documents handed out by the National Information Service, the Secretariat of Public Security, the Federal and Military Police, we found Report nº873 that established SORPE's activity as "uniquely and solely to indoctrinate and guide the rural sector". The document describes the envisioning of classes at SORPE's headquarters in order to increase the control of rural unionization. They turn their attention to Father Paulo Crespo who is described as "a very subtle and insightful intellectual" with "great insertion in the rural environment". Father Crespo's performance was described in the sugarcane zone as "doctrinal action" in "Cavaleiro, Jaboatão, Moreno"¹⁰. The rural syndication operation was initially oriented to prioritize the sugarcane zone around Recife.

In 1962, SORPE created the Federation of Agricultural Workers of Pernambuco and extended the unionization to cities like Caruaru, Lajedo, Limoeiro, Timbaúba, Vitória de Santo Antão. Father Crespo aimed at distinguishing the performance of the Leagues' SORPE. He stated that:

The peasant Leagues by themselves are not the best tool for solving the peasants' conditions. [...] In the midst of all contradictions, the rural syndicalist movement emerged as a pressing force for enhancing of our democracy. It is the last hope for the peasants (PAGE, 1972, p. 185).

Despite such statements it is possible to identify patronizing approaches in SORPE. The general control of the organizing forces of this movement focused on Father Crespo and Father Melo, who showed no inclination to pass on their control to the peasant leaders they were training in defining their own patronizing practices. According to Marin, the Church had strong assets and assumed complex bureaucratic operations in the creation of the unions, which often initiated in the parish churches premises. The Catholic Action provided human and material resources; however, other resources also existed in this work of the Church as funds for parishes, dioceses, national organizations, international Catholic organizations and international trade union organizations (MARIN, 1992, p.96).

⁹ Interview held on 07/20/2018 with one of the lecturers of SORPE training courses.

¹⁰ Record n.29.679 SORPE – DOPS-PE

Among the resources received, the American Central Information Agency provided support to the rural workers' mobilization. SORPE received funding from the CIA in order to reduce the revolutionary potential of the rural labor movement in Pernambuco. CIA agents worked as technicians at the Cooperative League – CLUSA developing close contacts with SORPE and with Father Crespo. CIA resources were then used within the movement to assist with SORPE's wages payment and expenses. In this financing, the rural workers' organization received resources from people who might not have contributed otherwise to rural unionization efforts (CRESPO, 1990, p. 46).

The rural workers' organization received financial aid from the CIA through CLUSA in December 1964. However, in 1967 the Cooperative League - CLUSA withdrew its financial support from SORPE. At this time, CLUSA's connection with the CIA was disclosed. USAID and the Peace Corps took on the rural labor and cooperative movements. In addition to CLUSA helping to set up agricultural cooperatives, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), created by the AFL-CIO that was active in the post-coup labor movement to combat communist and Castro influences in Latin America (CORREA, 2007).

In an interview to the CPDOC in 1978¹¹, Father Crespo declares that he refused to receive funds for purposes other than the organization of rural workers in trade unions. The interviewer questions him about the CIA's money, and the priest reinforces his relationship with IADESIL - the American Institute for the Development of Free Trade Unionism, funded by the American trade union confederations. The relationship with IADESIL, described as "legally recognized in the country", meant raising funds for the installation of community centers of workers. AIFLD scheduled training courses for labor leaders, building peasant service centers under the banner: building "free and democratic unions" amid a repressive regime established in 1964.

¹¹ Interview for the " Trajetória e Desempenho das Elites Políticas Brasileiras" research, part of the institutional project of the CPDOC Oral History Program, in force since its creation in 1975. CRESPO, Enes Paulo. Paulo Crespo (deposition, 1978). Rio de Janeiro, CPDOC, 1990. 46 p. dat.

The priest declares that he refused to receive funding for several ends, such as creating health and education programs in each union. Such programs were denied, and Father Crespo affirms that they accepted donation, but not interference in the organization:

We want to build some community centers of workers, in which they will always be able to meet, discuss their problems, take courses and trainings according to their needs. We only accept it if one immediately give the deed of land, the complete deed of donation of the building and if one does not interfere in the building administration (CRESPO, 1990).

IADESIL agreed to the priest's proposal and with the resource provided by them, SORPE built the Rural Workers' Centers in Carpina, Ribeirão and Garanhuns. The priest emphasizes that despite sticking to the agreement, IADESIL did not interfere and "to this day these centers remain in the hands of the Federation, as an ongoing school for debate, of leadership for the great rural working class-based problems in the state." CRESPO, 1990).

Receiving funds from US labor federations in 1962 was the first link established prior to the 1964 coup. The priest also states receiving funding after the coup. Regarding the resources received from CLUSA - American Cooperatives League, Father Crespo states that "as early as 64, we began to work on the rural workers cooperative. Thus, in order to organize these cooperatives, we signed an open agreement with the American Cooperatives League". Each cooperative received around 10,000 *cruzeiros* for installation costs, building shelves and buying a cash machine. It was meant to be a revolving fund in an open agreement. There were also funding of courses and training, but these could only be lectured by the priests.

The Church, fighting for rights, monitoring and repression by the military regime

There is intense historiographical debate regarding role of the Church in establishing the Civil-Military Coup of 1964. From the perspective that the Church was not a homogeneous block, but rather comprised of several performances and players, it is possible to note the paths taken by the institution in the face of the political pulses of the second half of the twentieth century.

The closeness to entities that financed and articulated the Coup brings to light the ambivalences of the institution that got involved in a movement linked to the lower class, especially the workers' class, between the late 1950s and the early 1960s (DELGADO, 2007).

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the Medellín Conference (1968) gave birth to a Church-structuring movement in Latin America focused on Social Justice, better living conditions and protection of human rights discourses. Catholicism found in Latin America a place for renewal from where it could then be disseminated throughout the world. Faced with a historical rupture after more than four centuries of religious monopoly in Latin American societies, the Catholic Church sought strategies to regain confessional affiliations by means of structural reforms. Olivier Compagnon reports a crisis in the Latin American Catholicism and the profound changes in the years that frame the Second Vatican Council (COMPAGNON, 2008). The Catholic Church in Latin America experienced an intense renewal process described as institutional and ideological. The institutional renewal took place with the creation of National Episcopal Councils, such as the CNBB in 1952, CELAM in 1955 and several Catholic universities. The renewal was also considered ideological with the emergence of currents of thought questioning the role of the Church in the modern world with the efforts of Brazilian priests in favor of the countryside workers and their organizations in the 1950s and 1960s (COMPAGNON, 2008, p. 13). The defense of social and human rights placed the Church in conflict with the authoritarian state that hardened its repression in 1968 with the Institutional Act No. 5.

In the 1970s, the Church began denouncing the abuses of the military regime and emerged as an opposition force, suffering from monitoring and repression. The debate on the practices of torture and repression of the Brazilian authoritarian regime gains space in the international auditoriums. In May 1970, Archbishop Helder Câmara was announced in the *Le Monde* newspaper as a guest of the Cardinal Marty of Paris for a conference organized by the *Catholique des Intellectuels Français Center*¹². During his stay in France, the archbishop also spoke to the Orleans and Lyon audience. A new publication in *Le Monde* on the eve of the Conference presented part of Dom Helder's speech, advancing the content to be discussed: "*Les tortures existant au Brésil. Ce ne sont pas des cas isolés. In conscience, j'en parlerai ouvertement le 26 mai à la Mutualité*". Bishop Helder exposed the existence and expansion of torture in the country under the military regime.

To ensure a place in the public meeting with the archbishop of Recife and Olinda it would be necessary to withdraw an invitation at the Catholic Center of Intellectuals¹³. The great demand to attend the Conference of Dom Helder in Paris was announced in *Le Monde* with the site change from the “*grande salle de la Mutualité*” to the “*Palais des Sports*”¹⁴. The conference was held on May 26 at the Palais des Sports in Paris and the report of two cases of torture motivated the clarification of the archbishop, two students from Recife and a young Dominican man from São Paulo (MARIN, 1992, p.226). Dom Helder brings figures from the Association of Jurists that report 12,000 political prisoners in Brazil and countless other forms of torture practiced by the Brazilian State. The conference sought international recognition of the practices of the military regime in Brazil.

The repercussion of the conference falls on the archbishop with campaigns of international defamation against Brazil. In a meeting with the General Assembly of the CNBB, the Minister of Justice gets the torture reports and declares the defamatory intentions of Dom Helder (MARIN, 1992, p.227).

The archbishop experienced censorship in Brazil and the Minister of Justice prohibits reference to his name in all media. However, the episcopate also demonstrates solidarity to him, which Marin considered to be of “international notoriety” and a “national silence”. While the archbishop is silenced in the national media, he is heavily monitored by the Security services.

Dossiers assembled by the National Information Service (SNI) mapped Dom Helder's steps with dates, locations, newspaper clippings, and his speech across the country and around the world. The mapping shows he was in Canada, the United States, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and France in 1970. SNI records Dom Helder's speech in the Canadian press, describing “*D. Helder Câmara, marginalized, stated that whoever wants to experience the Christian spirit in Latin America is soon labeled as a communist.*”¹⁵ In response to a “National Defamation Campaign” acknowledged by Dom Helder, he writes a document in 1970 entitled “Who sponsors my travels”. The archbishop reports that among the “most absurd and nasty” hypotheses, the sponsoring of his travels was said to be the result of “bank robberies.”

Dom Helder reports slanderous hypotheses such as “Fidel Castro is who takes me so often to the USA” and “Mao Tse-Tung to Europe”, as well as being sponsored by the “French lefts”.

¹² *Le Monde*. 08.05.1970. P.12

¹³ *Le Monde*. 26.05.1970. P.10

¹⁴ *Le Monde*. 27.05.1970. P.18

The heavy inquiries were being carried by newspapers and television without room for defense or response. In the document filed by the Regional NE II of the CNBB, the archbishop reports his international travels with tickets and lodging paid by several organizations related to invitations, many of which were refused so they would not lead to greater absence from the Archdiocese. The archbishop believes that talking about his travels abroad is self-promotion, but he understands that before the intense accusations, to not talk about it would mean to consent. Beginning with his travels in 1970, he writes:

Forgive those who get steamed up by the invitations I receive, but, if it's God's will, I will go to Japan in October. Who invites me and sponsors the tickets and lodging? The World Conference on Religion and Peace. If you want proof, write to the Secretary-General Mr. Homer A. Jack. 2-7 Motoyoyogi-machi, Shibuya-ku. Tokyo-Japan '. [...] Right now, I plan to confirm to an invitation from the University of Havard to return to give a lecture to its students. This is the address for anyone who questions my statement: '20 Arrow Street. Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138 - USA'.¹⁶

The strategy of not only exposing the motive, but also the address for people to check the motivation of the trips, points to the search for disclosure of the document written by the Archbishop amid the repression he suffered by the persecution of the military regime established. In the face of the global bipolarization scenario, when the archbishop states "Beware of staying in the West", he says he would be cautious of only accepting invitations from the West, even though receiving invitations from organizations with "freedom of thought and criticism", and he teases when writing "if I they call me a Communist, even though I'm careful not to go to the Eastern Countries, and despite my heavy criticism of the USSR and Red China, what if I were to cross the Curtain?"¹⁷

In 1976, the international press turned its attention to the situation in Brazil and especially to the Church's denunciations about the precarious condition of poor people. In a *Le Monde* article, Charles Vanhecke recounts the Church withdrawing to speak out against the policy of the military regime. The violence in the relationships in rural areas was highlighted on the article and exposed arbitrary arrests of bishops and coercive interrogations, in which bishops Dom Estevão Cardoso Avelar and Dom Alano Pena were allegedly questioned for two days by the military about the doctrine of the Church and about what they thought of Dom Helder Camara and Dom Lefebvre¹⁸.

¹⁵ National Archive - Dossier D. Helder Camara Folder 2 AC ACE 13361 70

¹⁶ Northeast Regional Archive II - CNBB Dom Helder Câmara - "Quem me financia as viagens".

¹⁷ Northeast Regional Archive II - CNBB Dom Helder Câmara - "Quem me financia as viagens".

The Church's perspective changed, and it conflicted with the regime¹⁹. The flag of rights and Social Justice stood against the guidance of the State. Then, the Church suffered the wave of violence against all the leaderships and mobilizations that were not in agreement with the regime (DELGADO, 2007, p.118). The Church responder to the defamatory attacks through publications, conferences and denunciations of the Brazilian social and political scenario.

In its multitude of paths: being perceived as contributor and as opposition, the Church assumes the role of spokesperson for a large part of the civil society amid strong repression of the leaden years. At the end of the 1970s and in the opening process, the orientations considered more progressive seemed to lead in the political arena towards public expression in opposition to the regime.

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¹⁸ Le Monde. 14.II.1976 P.4

¹⁹ Sobre relações entre Igreja e Estado durante o regime militar ver: SERBIN, K. Secret dialogues. Church-State Relations, Torture, and Social Justice in Authoritarian Brazil. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000.

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