

DIPLOMATIC ACTION AGAINST DOM HELDER CAMARA: REVEALED DOCUMENTS FROM BRAZILIAN'S FOREIGN OFFICE

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Abstract

This article analyzes the documents revealed by the Dom Helder Camara Truth Commission of Pernambuco, which received them from Brazilian's foreign office (Itamaraty). Their publication represents an achievement of the right to memory and truth, revealing the diplomatic action against the Brazilian prelate who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize three times. The methodology applied in this essay was based on content analysis and internal criticism of the documents made available. Among the primary sources are confidential diplomatic correspondence that reports on the intense activity of diplomatic agents and their strategies behind the scenes of the Brazilian state's lobbying against the international recognition that the Nobel Peace Prize would give to Dom Helder Camara and his struggles for justice and peace. This is, therefore, one of the most important discoveries in studies on the relationship between Church and State in Brazil in the field of transitional justice.

Keywords

Transitional Justice. Dom Helder Camara. Human Rights.

Summary

1. Introduction. 2. Revealed documents. 3. The Popular Peace Prize. 4. Conclusion.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the most emblematic and significant awards in the world is known by the name of its creator, Alfred Nobel. The Nobel Peace Prize is intended to distinguish "the person who has done the most or best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the promotion of peace treaties." Since 1901, when it was established, the prize has been awarded to a wide range of personalities and institutions, from those who participated in the resolution of a particular conflict, government leaders, or negotiators; to organizations that promote solidarity among peoples and individuals, such as the Red Cross; as well as exceptional men and women whose lives, actions, and testimonies have contributed to peaceful and fraternal coexistence among people.

At the end of the 20th century, all the criteria were fully met by Dom Helder Camara². His example of life and dedication to the poor made his biography, personality, and the scope of his mission attested to by the countless endorsements and nominations he received for the 1970 Prize, including from the 1968 laureate, René Cassin³, and continued until 1973.

In Brazil, the news of his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize generated a negative reaction from the authoritarian regime. The international recognition of Dom Helder represented explosive content for the civil-military government and its plans to remain in power. For this

² Dom Helder Pessoa Camara (1909–1999) was archbishop of Olinda and Recife of the Catholic Church from 1964 to 1985, implementing the social doctrine of the Church during his tenure. He was a theologian, writer, and one of the most prominent voices in the defense of human rights and social justice in Brazil and around the world. His work was particularly noteworthy during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985), when he became one of the main peaceful opponents of the regime. For his achievements, he was declared the Brazilian Patron of Human Rights. He was one of the founders and first secretary-general of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB), working in the organization and coordination of the Catholic Church in Brazil.

³ PILETTI, 1997. p.10.

reason, letters and diplomatic documents immediately prove the State's action against the nomination. Former diplomat Vasco Mariz⁴ describes in detail the first initiatives to prevent Bishop Camara from receiving the 1970 Nobel Peace Prize.

At that time, Vasco Mariz was head of the Cultural Department of Itamaraty, still in Rio de Janeiro, and was summoned to a meeting with the secretary-general of Itamaraty, Jorge de Carvalho e Silva. At this meeting, Muniz received information that Dom Helder had been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize by various movements and religious entities and that he was the favorite.

His next task was to call a meeting at Itamaraty with the ambassadors of the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland) and convey the Brazilian government's discomfort with the issue. The meeting took place in the Indian Room of the Itamaraty Palace, where it was requested: "on an exceptional basis, that they intervene with the Nobel Foundation (a private entity) to prevent the selection"⁵. According to his account, days later all the ambassadors returned regretting that their respective governments did not interfere "in Nobel matters and could not make an exception on that occasion"⁶.

Vasco Mariz forwarded the ambassadors' negative response to the Secretary-General of Itamaraty. However, he noted:

[...] I later learned from Alarico Silveira, then head of the Itamaraty Information Service [...] who attended a meeting at the Planalto Palace in Brasília a few days later, that the matter had taken a dramatic turn. The presidents and directors of all Scandinavian companies in Brazil, such as Volvo, Scania Vabis, Ericson, Ficit, Nokia, and other

⁴ MARIZ, 2013, p.82.

⁵ MARIZ, 2013, p.82.

⁶ MARIZ, 2013, p.82.

smaller companies, were summoned and asked to intervene with the Nobel Foundation to prevent Dom Helder Camara from receiving the Nobel Prize. Everyone regretted not being able to intervene in the case until the general officer presiding over the meeting banged his fist on the table and announced: if you do not intervene firmly and Dom Helder receives the Nobel Peace Prize, then your companies in Brazil will not be able to send a cent of profits to their respective headquarters. At that time, during General Médici's administration, the government had the means to take such serious action⁷.

⁸Mariz still recalls that, according to Alarico Silveira, General Juracy Magalhães (former Brazilian ambassador to Washington, former Minister of Justice, and former Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Castelo Branco administration) protested against this threat in his capacity as president of Ericsson in Brazil.

2. DOCUMENTS REVEALED.

At the same time, Brazil's ambassador in Oslo, Jayme de Souza Gomes, was mobilized to monitor and inform the Brazilian government about the archbishop's candidacy.

Documents that are now in the public domain show how Ambassador Jayme de Souza worked tirelessly against the archbishop, bringing his letters and documents to light and revealing details of the plot

⁷ MARIZ, 2013, p.83.

⁸ Given the seriousness of the account published in his work, as rapporteur for the case at the Dom Helder Camara Memory and Truth Commission, I contacted Vasco Mariz, who confirmed the information in his book.

that led the country to take diplomatic action against the nominations in all the years he was nominated and could have received the award.

In 1970, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to American professor Norman Borlaug—a specialist in plant physiology, also known as the "father of the green revolution"—because his work led to technological innovations responsible for unprecedented increases in productivity in the cultivation of food grains, especially in India and⁹.

Telegram from the Embassy in Oslo No. 26,032, dated December 11, 1970, from Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes, informs the Brazilian government about reactions against the result of the Nobel Peace Prize, denied to Dom Helder, where it is mentioned:

[...] to culminate the entrance to the Oslo University ceremony hall where the ceremony was held, there was a widespread distribution of pamphlets [...] mentioning the Norwegian Peace Council, which asks: "Why was the Nobel Committee afraid to support Bishop Helder Camara in his fight against fascism in favor of social justice in Brazil?"¹⁰.

At the same time, the Brazilian ambassador in Oslo, Jayme de Souza Gomes, was mobilized to monitor and inform the Brazilian government about the archbishop's candidacy.

The message is the result of an assessment by the embassy, which, in diplomatic language, understands that this demonstration would already be a strategy to favor Dom Helder's nomination for the following year.

Among the international accusations against the authoritarian regime was the murder of members of indigenous peoples. These accusations were supported by the dictatorship's development project, which lacked social control, such as the colonization of areas of the Amazon

⁹ PILETTI, 1997. p.11.

¹⁰ Itamaraty, 26,032.

rainforest and the Trans-Amazonian Highway (BR-230), which began during the military dictatorship. To combat these accusations, the dictators invested in the work of the Villas Boas brothers, responsible for one of the most important indigenous reserves in the Americas, the Xingu National Park. Much is owed to the work of these men who dedicated their lives to the defense of indigenous peoples: Orlando (1914-2002), Cláudio (1916-1988), and Leonardo Villas-Bôas (1918-1961).

In the same month of December, in another telegram (Telegram from the Oslo Embassy No. 27,910, dated December 30, 1970), the ambassador expressed his pessimism regarding another possible candidacy favored by the Brazilian regime of the Villas Boas brothers:

[...] I sought to sound out not only Mr. Tore Munck but also other elements of my relations equally susceptible to influencing members of the Nobel Committee. However, my personal impression after dealing with such a delicate problem for more than half a year is that the Villas Boas brothers have little chance of success because their work is regional in nature and not directly linked to international peace¹¹.

The telegram ends with a message that reveals the ideological weight that the civil-military government threw against the nomination of the Brazilian priest linked to liberation theology:

Emptying this year (1970) helder camara's candidacy obeyed a well-conceived plan executed with great caution without any official management or direct or indirect involvement. Success is due to very special circumstances related to the protection of foreign capital threatened in the event of brazil's leftist turn and facts related to the candidate's past

¹¹ Itamaraty, Telegram from the Embassy in Oslo No. 26,032, dated December 11, 1970.

life skillfully exploited by incisive journalistic controversy [sic].

Another telegram from the Embassy informs the Brazilian government that the President of the Christian Democratic Party of Hamburg, Dietrich Rollmann, has nominated the Brazilian Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, Helder Camara, for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971¹².

With Dom Helder Camara's candidacy confirmed, the Embassy in Oslo forwarded Norway's "Confidential Parliamentary Report" to the Brazilian authorities via Special Correspondence No. 55, 640, 91 (77) – 1970 Nobel Peace Prize. Confidential Report of the Norwegian Parliament¹³:

[...] Reference to secret telegram No. 101/70. As promised in secret telegrams 79/70 and 92/70, I am sending, attached, in Norwegian, photocopies of the extensive confidential report, consisting of 61 pages, printed and sent to me by Mr. Tore Munck, Director of the SverreMunck Industrial Group, in Bergen, Director of "Munck do Brasil S/A" and of the independent morning newspaper in this capital, "Morgensposten"¹⁴.

¹² Itamaraty, Embassy Telegram No. 09, dated January 26, 1971.

¹³ Itamaraty, Telegram from the Embassy in Oslo No. 55 – 1970 Nobel Peace Prize. Confidential Report from the Norwegian Parliament, dated January 27, 1971.

¹⁴ A letter dated September 9, 1996, from Jon Sletbak [Annex III], senior producer at NRK-TV, to historian Walter Praxedes, records a survey on the subject of the Nobel Peace Prize for Dom Helder Camara, providing information based on diplomatic documents and statements from journalistic sources that were acquired by the Norwegian TV company with a view to making a documentary. Jon Sletbak makes it clear that one of his sources reported that "the former director of Munch do Brasil S.A., at that time one of Norway's largest industrialists abroad, said that the owner, Mr. Tore Munch, was called to São Paulo and asked what he could do as a Norwegian to prevent Dom Helder from winning the Prize." Another source of Sletbank, the former Consul General of Norway in São Paulo, even stated that all foreign industrialists were mobilized by the Dane Henning Boilesen to

It is worth noting here that the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee is composed of five members appointed by the Norwegian Parliament, members who have a social, academic, and political life that allowed the Brazilian embassy to take action against Dom Helder.

In the text cited, Dom Helder's name seems to occupy a more prominent place (ten pages of the report) than the names of other strong candidates, such as Brazilian professor and physician Josué de Castro (two pages) and professor Norman Ernest Borlaug (two pages). In the same Special Correspondence No. 55, Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes highlights two aspects raised by the rapporteur for Dom Helder's candidacy, Professor Jakob Sverdrup:

a) the fervent praise for the personality and work of Dom Helder Camara and b) the criticism of the current Brazilian government. It suffices to quote certain excerpts from the report on Dom Helder Camara to confirm these assertions.

He quotes extensively from the report:

[...] His message of non-violence in today's Latin America can be considered important for the preservation of peace, because it represents a

contribute financially to Operação Bandeirantes - OBAN. This cash contribution made available by the businessmen was based on the fight against communism.

[...] all foreign industrialists, including those from the Nordic countries, were previously called upon by the Danish Mr. Henning Boilesen, president of ULTRAGAS, to contribute financially to Boilesen's fight against communism (i.e., OBAN). Mr. Abreu Sodré confirmed this in an interview with me, in which he vigorously attacks Dom Helder.

This information was confirmed by Sletbank through contact with Niels Boilesen, who added that his brother Henning had visited the Nobel Institute to pressure the Committee against possibly awarding Dom Helder the Nobel Prize.

According to his account, "Nordic industrialists were apprehensive that Dom Helder's growing influence could lead to the establishment of an ultra-leftist political regime in Brazil, considering what had recently happened in Chile. In their view, this would be a threat to the capital invested in Brazil."

realistic alternative to the rise of terrorism and guerrilla movements. His personal courage is indisputable. He has prestige and importance, which means that his message is heard both in Brazil and outside the country. (The Sunday Times, May 17, refers to him as the most influential man in Latin America after Fidel Castro). It should also be mentioned that Camara represents not only himself, but also a large and important current within the Catholic Church in Latin America. [...].

The "Confidential Report of the Norwegian Parliament"¹⁵ lists the reasons—personal attributes and the scope of his work—that would recommend Dom Helder Camara for the Nobel Prize:

[...] 1) Helder Camara's leadership position within the Church, while at the same time playing an important role in the struggle for social reform; 2) He is an important proponent of non-violence. 3) He has gained increasing international importance, as evidenced by the role he played during the Second Vatican Council and his attendance at various international conferences. According to the Swedish authors of the proposal, awarding the Peace Prize to Dom Helder would be of inestimable importance in a situation where Helder Camara's activities are generally censured and opposed by the conservative Church and the Brazilian authorities¹⁶.

The "Confidential Report of the Norwegian Parliament" also highlights the importance and scope of the educational program broadcast

¹⁵ From 01/27/1971 Special Correspondence No. 55, 640,91(77), cited above.

¹⁶ Cf. Itamaraty, Confidential Report of the Norwegian Parliament, January 27, 1971. p. XI;

by radio stations (Movimento de Educação de Base - MEB) coordinated by Dom Helder, which by 1963 had already reached 7,500 radio stations, with 180,000 students enrolled.

In 1963, there were already 7,500 radio stations and 180,000 students enrolled. The program was subsidized by the state and blessed by the Church, but gradually took a direction that aroused the reaction of the authorities and created dissent within the Church. The program's design clearly demonstrates Camara's philosophy. Teaching was only a means to make students aware and active members of society¹⁷.

Finally, in his opinion, Jakob Sverdrup also highlights the Archbishop's role in publicizing and denouncing to the world, governments, and international organizations the dramatic situation of exploitation, hunger, and misery (deprived, therefore, of their minimum rights) in which entire populations lived in Brazilian territory, as well as in vast portions of the planet.

In a telegram from the Oslo Embassy (No. 2,765) dated February 1, Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes reports on his initiative with the British ambassador to consult him about possible British government support for the Villas Bôas brothers' nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize, since they had been nominated by Survival International, a non-governmental organization supporting indigenous peoples, based in England. The consultation proved fruitless: the British diplomat's assessment was that such a bid would not be successful.

In another attempt (Telegram Oslo No. 4,152 – Nobel Prize), the Embassy began gathering information for a Norwegian journalist's visit to Brazil with the aim of publicizing the work of the Villas Boas brothers.

¹⁷ Itamaraty, op cit. p. XIV.

The Norwegian journalist's visit is again the subject of Telegram No. 98 to the Embassy in London – Nobel Prize, in which the ambassador emphasizes the secret nature of his dealings with the journalist, to be chosen through “careful selection.”

Telegram No. 95 (from September 1971) – which deals with the journalist's visit and adds news about the inauguration of Munk do Brasil's new factory – reveals the Ambassador's concern that the selected journalist, Audun Tjomsland, had asked, during lunch with Tore Munck, if he would be allowed to visit other unscheduled locations. It also reveals a related concern: banker Sjur Lindebraekke, director of the Board of Directors of Bergens Privat Bank, was a member of the Nobel Committee and could not be compromised by any leak of information concerning Dom Helder or any action involving his candidacy.

In the same telegram, Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes adds another element to the web of business interests involved in the campaign against Dom Helder: he cites the "disinterested collaboration" of Ruy Mesquita (director of the newspaper O Estado de São Paulo), who allegedly offered a plane ticket to the Norwegian journalist and who was "committed to helping neutralize the Brazilian archbishop's candidacy."

All these initiatives were not enough to make the Villas Boas brothers' candidacy viable. And in the ambassador's communication to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in Telegram No. 6599 - Villas Boas brothers and Dom Helder Camara, we read:

[...] Norwegian Parliament [...] accepted the registration of 32 candidates for the 1971 peace prize, including Willy Brant, Helder Camara, and Orlando Cláudio Villas Boas. Of the registered candidates, 21 were eliminated, including Villas

Boas. Brant and Camara are among the 11 semifinalists [...]¹⁸.

The information was relayed to the Brazilian Embassy in London by Telegram No. 170¹⁹.

The elimination of the Villas Bôas brothers and the inclusion of D. Helder Camara in the list of semifinalists served as a warning to the Brazilian government and led Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes to continue and deepen his investigations. In “Special Correspondence from the Embassy in Oslo No. 122 – on the 1971 Nobel Peace Prize; Parliamentary Commission Meeting; Selection of Candidates,” the diplomat reports on part of these efforts:

[...] In an attempt to assess the position of the two candidates who, at the moment, seem to have the greatest chances of success, namely Chancellor Willy Brandt and Archbishop Dom Helder Camara, I also sought, after consulting my sources of information, to determine the reasons for the failure of Villas-Boas' candidacy, as these are Brazilian personalities whose meritorious work is praised by all of us and to whom the Secretary of State referred in his telegraphic dispatches

9. Dom Helder Camara

[...] I will attempt to portray the concept that the Brazilian Archbishop enjoys in the eyes of the Nobel Committee: a) his work in favor of the needy and against strong-arm governments; b) his publications and sermons of a frankly leftist nature; c) his contribution to the pacification of the

¹⁸ Idem, Telegram No. 6599 – Nobel Peace Prize. Villas-Boas Brothers and Dom Helder Câmara, March 11, 1971.

¹⁹ Ibidem. Telegram No. 170.

oppressed or less fortunate masses; d) his contribution to the union between Catholics and Protestants in the campaign for better social conditions for humanity; e) his prestige with Pope Paul VI. In this regard, it would be appropriate to highlight what was recently published by the Vatican's official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, which considered Dom Helder Camara to be "a man of God, a man of Christ, a man of the poor, like St. Francis of Assisi"²⁰.

The ambassador's communication in Oslo also seeks to align aspects that he considered negative and that would weaken Camara's candidacy:

[...] The following essential points weakened Dom Helder Camara's position in the Nobel Committee's view: a) the journalistic controversy in 1970 about his personality and work and his previous links to right-wing political regimes; b) fears that his growing influence, due to the awarding of the Peace Prize, could contribute to the establishment of a far-left government in Brazil, as recently happened in Chile, and thus threaten foreign capital through expropriation or "nationalization," obviously putting Norwegian investments at risk. Brazil is where Norway has the largest amount of capital invested abroad; c) criticism of the lack of economic knowledge in his attacks on the current Brazilian government's policy²¹.

²⁰ Itamaraty, Special Report from the Embassy in Oslo No. 122 – on the 1971 Nobel Peace Prize. Parliamentary Commission Meeting. Selection of candidates. p. 2–4.

²¹ Cf. Itamaraty, p. 5.

In his monitoring of Dom Helder's candidacy for the Nobel Peace Prize, as well as the repercussions of his actions in Europe, the Ambassador notes (Special Correspondence from the Embassy in Oslo, No. 231, May 28, 1971) that Dom Helder Camara had appealed to West and East Germans "to break down the barriers that separate their countries"²².

In addition to working with the members of the Norwegian Nobel Prize Committee and coordinating business leaders against Dom Helder's candidacy, there was also a communication task: to publicize negative aspects of the Archbishop's political and intellectual biography.

In the Embassy's Special Correspondence (Oslo No. 231 – 1971 Nobel Peace Prize), Ambassador Souza Gomes draws attention to the contact between "Mr. Tore Albert Munck, president of Munck do Brasil S.A., and the Brazilian Ambassador in London, Roberto Campos, from which arose the idea of using a monograph by a Belgian Dominican friar, Felix Andrew Morlion – The Political Dialectic of Dom Helder Camara – as a tool in the campaign against Dom Helder Câmara's candidacy.

In the same correspondence, Jayme de Souza Gomes makes it clear that the action against Dom Helder's candidacy for the 1971 Nobel Prize should focus on economic and social aspects, taking into account the high Norwegian investments in Brazil. The document also states that two of the five members of the judging committee were parliamentarians who were particularly sensitive to this approach to the issue.

[...] Whatever the effect of the dissemination of the study on Dom Helder Camara, this Embassy wishes to emphasize, with the utmost confidentiality, that the program of action against the candidacy of the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife should focus this year on its economic and social aspects. In fact, Brazil is the foreign country in which Norway has invested the most capital,

²² Itamaraty, 231.

with the Norwegian government giving political guarantees for the application of part of this capital through the Borregaard project²³. It should also be considered that two members of the Nobel Committee are parliamentarians who voted in favor of this guarantee and, finally, that the defense of this capital invested in Brazil is a settled matter. Thus, it becomes clear that a left-leaning Brazilian figure who substantially attacks the capitalist regime, if he becomes universally known by winning the Nobel Peace Prize, can only contribute to the formation of a political and social environment that will put foreign capital at risk, including Norwegian capital²⁴.

The monograph *The Political Dialectic of Dom Helder Camara*, by Felix A. Morlion, seeks to describe a supposed new type of "anti-capitalist movement" that would have Camara as one of its main representatives: "It is fundamentally different from the Marxist and Maoist movements in that it has no materialistic traits, but rather consists of channeling political action into deeply Christian energies and sentiments."

Morlion attempts to conduct an extensive examination of speeches, interviews, and writings by Dom Helder, in which he identifies a combination of analytical elements (referring to the international division of labor and prevailing social and political structures), denunciatory content (of poverty, exploitation, oppression), and a strong rhetorical and emotional appeal directed at a call to take an ideological stand against injustices. Although he admits that the Brazilian prelate also denounced "totalitarian

²³ Borregaard ASA is a Norwegian multinational company mainly comprising chemical industries.

²⁴ See Itamaraty, p. 3.

regimes," he claims to have found a strong anti-capitalist bias in most of these statements.

Despite being part of the opposition to Dom Helder Camara's candidacy, the personality, if not the ideas, of Felix Andrew Morlion would not have convinced even our ambassador in Oslo.

In July 1971, in response to a request for information diligently sent by him, the Vatican embassy replied that Felix Andre Morlion had denied the existence of the monograph about Bishop Helder. Furthermore, the Dominican friar did not "enjoy a good reputation in circles responsible for the Vatican," being considered "immature."

A Belgian national, during World War II he went to the US presenting himself as an emissary of the Holy See, which was not true. The document also mentions that Morlion received "substantial grants" from important organizations for the creation of Pro Deo²⁵, an organization that did not achieve official recognition from the Catholic Church²⁶. Still on the subject of Felix Andrew Morlion, Vatican Embassy Telegram No. 24425 reports to Oslo that he denied the existence of the monograph on Dom Helder Camara. "But that it was written by him, with a limited number of copies and confidential circulation"²⁷.

Finally, Special Correspondence from the Oslo Embassy, No. 565, dated February 2, 1971, announces the selection of Willy Brandt as that year's Nobel Peace Prize laureate and includes attached articles from local newspapers reporting on the news.

In its communication, the Embassy subdivides the news into four categories:

²⁵ This is an Istituto di Studi Superiori Pro Deo, an educational institution based in Rome. It no longer exists.

²⁶ The response to the requests for information from the Embassy in Oslo came through the Vatican, forwarded to the military government by Telegram No. 48, dated July 6, 1971.

²⁷ Itamaraty, Vatican No. 24425.

“a) purely news items; b) those favorable to the German Chancellor; c) those favorable to the Brazilian Archbishop; and d) those that provoked a very strong controversy, involving Dom Helder Camara, the Nobel Committee, and Norwegian industrial figures with economic interests in Brazil”²⁸.

The Ambassador presents the campaign to publicize Dom Helder's integralist past as a success. In addition, given the Brazilian government's intention to prevent that candidacy, Norwegian economic groups that had a special interest in maintaining good relations with the military regime also worked to defeat it.

The same document records an interview with Dominican priest Hallvard Rieber-Mohn in the newspaper *Morgenbladet*, published the day after the Nobel announcement, in which he states:

[...] that Norwegian economic interests had a certain influence on the decision, since Cardinal Camara, who was the favorite for the Prize, did not win it this time either. Thus, for the first time since the campaign to "neutralize" Helder Camara's candidacy began, the "sensitive issue" on which the entire effort was based was raised, namely the possible risk of expropriation, nationalization, or statization of foreign capital in Brazil in the event of the Brazilian archbishop's victory²⁹.

In the last paragraph of the document, the ambassador states that even if defeated, the controversy surrounding the Nobel Prize would only help Dom Helder's candidacy for next year. He argues that Chilean Pablo

²⁸ Itamaraty, 565. p.5

²⁹ Itamaraty, 565, p.7.

Neruda was a candidate for ten years before receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature and that it would be no different for the Brazilian archbishop.

Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes seemed to be aware of the political risks incurred by the Brazilian government in pursuing the archbishop so vigorously. In a confidential document (Special Correspondence from the Oslo Embassy No. 605, dated December 29, 1971), he reveals his concern about an article published in the periodical "KirkeogKultur" (Church and Culture) entitled: "The agitation against Dom Helder Camara," authored by Mr. Henry Notaker and Reverend Father Hallvard Rieber-Mohn:

[...] they were the only two authors who touched on the fundamental arguments used in the campaign to undermine Dom Helder's candidacy in Brazil and Oslo, as can be seen from a simple reading of the article cited, which I refer to [...] all of Mr. Notaker's paragraphs reveal a deep knowledge of the maneuvers and personalities involved in the aforementioned campaign, and only the Brazilian Embassy in Oslo was fortunate and "miraculously" spared, that is, it was not even involved in the events, which, incidentally, was not the case with the German Ambassador to this country, who was the victim of unfair accusations in the awarding of this year's Nobel Prize³⁰.

The same document mentions a reference made by the authors of the aforementioned article about the distribution of 700,000 copies of the magazine "O Cruzeiro"; which in fact would have been 25,000, according to the ambassador. That issue of the magazine—part of the smear campaign against the archbishop—featured an interview with the then-well-known

³⁰ Itamaraty, 605 p. 3.

journalist David Nasser, who portrayed Dom Helder as a former fascist and advocate of the use of violence in resolving social conflicts.

Among the communications, there is a record that Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes emphasizes the need to make the role that the Embassy played in the campaign against Dom Helder more discreet. Special Correspondence from the Oslo Embassy No. 122, for example, reports on the list of nominations for the Nobel Prize in 1972 and once again announces Dom Helder Camara as the favorite. But this time, it describes the Embassy's participation as discreet so as not to cause any diplomatic embarrassment³¹. However, in 1972, the Nobel Peace Prize was not awarded³².

The following year, John W. Gran, bishop of Oslo, wrote to Dom Helder informing him of questions that had been raised by a member of the Nobel Committee Council regarding the Scandinavian Episcopal Conference's support for his nomination for the 1973 Nobel Prize.

It is important to highlight two points in the letter. According to Bishop John Gran, some members of the Nobel Committee wanted to know Dom Helder's position on guerrilla activity, and more specifically on urban guerrilla warfare. In addition, they asked him what he thought about birth control.

We reproduce here the full translation of John W. Gran's letter³³:

Your Excellency:

I am writing to you regarding the Nobel Peace Prize.

I have been asked by a member of the Nobel Committee here in Oslo to obtain two pieces of

³¹ Itamaraty, No. 122. p.8.

³² Until then, the Nobel Peace Prize had not been awarded on 18 occasions, usually in years or periods of major conflict, such as during World War I and World War II. The year 1972 – at the height of the Vietnam War – would be the nineteenth year without the Prize.

³³ Idhec/Cedohc document.

information about you. As you are well aware, your name has been among the serious candidates for several years. The Scandinavian Episcopal Conference formally and publicly proposed your name in September 1972 for the 1973 prize.

In short, it is a matter of clarifying a doubt that some members of the committee have raised on these two issues, namely:

Guerrilla activity in general, and urban guerrilla activity in particular;

Birth control.

More precisely, we seek to know whether you have made public statements on these two issues, in any sense. Apparently, someone has managed to convey to them the idea that you have made statements in favor of certain forms of guerrilla activity in certain cases. I beg to differ.

With regard to birth control, the impression has also been given that you have spoken out against all forms of such control, advocating unrestrained population growth everywhere. I beg to differ on this point as well.

In any case, rather than conducting a thorough investigation, I preferred to ask you both questions directly, in all simplicity. You could easily answer by indicating in which of your writings I can find your thoughts on both questions (it is sufficient to refer to question a or question b).

I don't think you remember me, but we met during the Council, during the last session, I believe, at an ecumenical meeting in an apartment not far from Castel Sant'Angelo. The details escape me.

I think it would be very good if you were awarded the Nobel Prize. For you, Your Excellency, it would perhaps be the cross of the Lord.
Allow me to congratulate you on your 64th birthday in a few days.
Fraternally yours in the Lord,
+ John W. Gran
Bishop of Oslo

On October 17, 1973, Dom Helder wrote a letter of thanks to his friend Francisco Moorem³⁴, founder of the group "Ação Dom Helder Camara" (Dom Helder Camara Action). This group had the purpose of strengthening his candidacy for the Nobel Peace Prize. Dom Helder asked him not to continue the campaign in favor of his name for the Nobel Prize. He emphasized the importance of the support he had received and the successful campaign that had strengthened Catholic and other church groups in favor of his name, but he thought it was time to stop. He understood that his work was already reflected in Martin Luther King's Nobel Prize.

At the very moment he was writing that letter, he added, five of his collaborators were missing; and he himself could be accused at any moment of Operation Hope, or another of his activities, being linked to subversion or terrorist groups.

In 1972, at the close of nominations for the Prize, then-Ambassador Souza Gomes, in Special Correspondence from the Embassy in Oslo, emphasized the Brazilian Archbishop's candidacy:

In 1971, the threat hanging over Norwegian capital invested in Brazil was highlighted, due to the possible risk of expropriation, nationalization, or

³⁴ Letter from Dom Helder Camara to Francisco Mooren, October 17, 1973. Document from Idhec/Cedohe.

even statization, if the candidacy of the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife were to be successful, due to his increased prestige among the Brazilian popular classes (), his political ambition, and his leadership in the progressive wing of the Catholic Church in Brazil (³⁵).

However, the smear campaign carried out over two years, 1970 and 1971, had reached its peak and was losing momentum. The ambassador said he could no longer count on the following in future actions:

[...] personalities who were members of or closely linked to members of the Nobel Committee, who, trusting in the discretion [sic] of this Embassy, greatly assisted it in providing confidential information and circulating arguments destructive to the personality of the Brazilian prelate, and are increasingly reticent and fearful of taking any action that might again involve them in attempts to exert pressure in favor of or against any of the candidates for the peace prize³⁶.

All orchestrated behind the scenes, quietly, "basic arguments used in the polemic against the Brazilian archbishop's character," which, after being widely disseminated in the foreign press, turned into "virulent articles criticizing the Brazilian government and praising the defeated candidate for the peace prize" – Dom Helder Camara. "Basic arguments" that could not "be repeated ad infinitum," as stated by the ambassador, author of the document. These are, therefore, ambiguous reports without documentary support, but rather opinions from opponents, easily countered by foreign

³⁵ Documents provided to CEMVDHC by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Special Correspondence from the Embassy in Oslo, No. 122, dated February 28, 1972. 1972 Nobel Peace Prize. Closing of Nominations. Status of Candidates.

³⁶ Idem.

newspapers at the time.

In 1972, the enemy, then hidden, ended its blatant campaign against Dom Helder Camara in a cowardly manner, expressing fear of being discovered in actions that were, at the very least, bizarre, in favor of the military regime:

Under these conditions, with the fundamental objective of avoiding any suspicion of interference by the Brazilian government or its diplomatic representation in this country in such a delicate matter, I believe that the action of this Embassy will have to be limited this year to closely monitoring the unfolding of events related to the selection of the 1972 Nobel Peace Prize, in the hope that its efforts, undertaken in 1970 and 1971, will still be able to stop, or at least mitigate, the persistent campaign by supporters of Dom Helder Camara in this country and abroad, who will not give up until the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife receives the glory of finally being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Jaime de Souza Gomes. Ambassador³⁷.

3. THE PEOPLE'S PEACE PRIZE

Vetoed in Brazil and celebrated abroad, Dom Helder Camara was nominated four times for the Nobel Peace Prize, a candidacy that received the support of the people and organizations in several countries, including workers in Latin America.

Fierce campaigns kept him from winning the prize. Confidential documents were produced, surrounded by the utmost secrecy, by the

³⁷ Itamaraty, no. 122.

Brazilian embassy in Oslo, without any official management, but which contributed to the discreet and fruitful undermining and, consequently, kept him from winning the prize³⁸.

In 1972, the then Brazilian ambassador in Oslo, Jayme de Souza Gomes, explained in a secret document to the Secretary of State about the situation of the candidates and the closing of registrations for that year's prize.

It is becoming increasingly difficult for this Embassy to try to prevent Helder Camara's candidacy from winning. In fact, the arguments used in the last two years had the primary purpose of making the Brazilian prelate controversial in the eyes of the Nobel Committee, but they cannot be repeated ad infinitum. In 1970, the Brazilian archbishop was presented as a former Nazi-fascist, given his past ties to the now defunct Brazilian Integralist Action, a circumstance that made him, to a certain extent, incompatible with circles linked to the Nobel Committee. (...) In 1971, the threat to Norwegian capital invested in Brazil was highlighted, due to the possible risk of expropriation, nationalization, or even statization, should the Archbishop of Olinda and Recife's candidacy be successful. (...)

On the other hand, the position of this Embassy is further weakened by the fact that the two basic arguments used in the controversy surrounding the Brazilian archbishop's personality were widely disseminated in the press of this country, through

³⁸ Official letter no. 324 of 10/29/70, from Ambassador Jayme de Souza Gomes to the Secretary of State.

virulent articles criticizing the Brazilian government and praising the defeated candidate for the Peace Prize,³⁹ .

As a result of the Nobel Committee's negative decisions not to award Dom Helder the Nobel Peace Prize, youth organizations in Norway, with the support of the Labor Movement, trade unions, and labor parties in the same country, outraged, organized themselves to raise donations to offer Dom Helder Camara, a personality who adopted the intention of "making the oppressed aware of their rights and enabling them to fight for themselves, on their own initiative," the People's Peace Prize.

The award was presented by Egil Ytrearne, president of the People's Peace Prize Committee and leader of the Norwegian Youth League (noregs Ungdemslag), a non-political organization that earned the support of all segments of the Norwegian people, who were happy to welcome and pay tribute to the great pioneer in the fight against oppression and poverty, in the words of the mayor of Oslo, where the award ceremony took place⁴⁰ .

The president of the organizing committee said:

When we received the news that Helder Câmara had once again not been deemed worthy of receiving the Nobel Peace Prize, now also in 1973, there was a widespread and spontaneous reaction among the Norwegian public.

When the campaign was launched, with representation from all political parties, it declared that the purpose of the prize was to raise funds for a cash donation to be given to the Brazilian archbishop:

[...] who was passed over for the fourth time in the distribution of the Nobel Peace Prize. The People's

³⁹ Secret Report No. 122 of February 28, 1972.

⁴⁰ APEJE – DOPS, Dom Helder Câmara File, cit., pp. 113/127, Folkets Fredspris, printed brochure, p. 9; 11; 12 and 17/19. In: <http://www.acervocepe.com.br/comissao-verdade.html>.

Peace Prize will be awarded to him for his work for Peace and Social Justice, through his fight against the exploitation of large groups of people in Brazil and the 'Third World'.

At the ceremony, Dom Helder was greeted by Bergfrid Fjose, a member of the Norwegian Parliament representing the Christian Democratic Party; by Ragnar Karlheim, leader of the Norwegian Trade Union; by Kaare Stoylen, leader of the Norwegian Church; and by Reverend Gunnar Stålsett, Secretary General of the Foreign Affairs Council of the Church of Norway. All emphasized Dom Helder's worthiness as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize in speeches encouraging the strategy of nonviolence advocated by him⁴¹.

In addition to Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, and Italy joined the campaign. The prize was awarded in Norwegian kroner, including marks that would be delivered at a later session in Frankfurt (Germany)⁴².

The Popular Peace Prize award ceremony ended with an appeal from the director of the Campaign, Gunnar Stålsett.

The name of Dom Helder Camara was once again presented to the Nobel Committee, supported by 450 parliamentarians from various European countries. Our movement is, in every currency, in every name, in every word, an appeal to the Nobel Committee to award Dom Helder Câmara the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974. Let others wait. Câmara should not wait any longer. We therefore conclude this action with a brief farewell, thanking everyone who made it possible⁴³.

⁴¹ Speech by Bishop Kaare Stoylen. Idem, *Folkets Fredspris*, pp. 20-21.

⁴² Speech by Egil Ytrearne. Ibid., *Folkets Fredspris*, pp. 13-14.

⁴³ Remarks by Gunnar Stålsett. Ibid., *Folkets Fredspris*, pp. 22-23.

The Prize was received in Oslo on February 10, 1974, when the honoree gave a long speech in which he proposed an alliance, a kind of pact, to morally pressure our friends, our relatives, our acquaintances, to become aware of situations of injustice, not to allow themselves to be manipulated, to react against any and all oppression of human beings.

[...] And if we exchange narrow ecumenism for a planetary ecumenism. God will help us. If we give credit to those who love human beings, loving, without knowing it, the Creator and Father, the Lord will use our smallness and our nothingness to work wonders.

Reaching millions of people—who, united, will be invincible—we will change governments, giving them a more humane purpose; we will liberate technicians, who will finally be able to use their intelligence and specialized training in the service of life rather than death; we will liberate the military, men like us, also children of God, because the day will come when "they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

Dream, Utopia? As far as I can see, the Humanizing Revolution has already begun. A revolution based on love of truth and neighbor. If the number of the Oppressed increases every day, so too does the number of Minorities who participate in the great liberating moral pressure. What decreases is the number of the indifferent, the lukewarm.

I will put the prize you have entrusted to me at the service of these dreams, these utopias. It will be a

help in the new war—without violence—for the Humanization of the World⁴⁴.

The following day, February 11, upon receiving the award in Frankfurt, Germany, he continued to speak on the theme of the Humanization of Man.

Man, created in the image and likeness of God, is destined to participate in divine life, divine nature, the power of God, dominating Nature, contemplating Creation, initiated by the Father; contemplating Liberation, begun by the Son; contemplating the humanization of the World, work to be done, together, with the Spirit of God. Delusion? Utopia? The impossible of impossibilities became reality: The Son of God became incarnate, became Man, became our Brother. After this prodigy, what more can we expect? The Father, preparing the divinization of Man, will certainly help us in the urgent and unpostponable work of the humanization of Man.⁴⁵

Anyone who observes Dom Helder's ideas in the circulars written during vigils, in interviews, and in newspaper articles knows that his denunciations of earthly injustices and arbitrariness were not limited to the pastor of souls, as so many wanted.

In areas such as northeastern Brazil, the greatest propagandists of radicalization and violence are all those who interpret peaceful but courageous and determined movements demanding integral

⁴⁴ Words of Dom Helder upon receiving the People's Peace Prize. Idem, *Folkets Fredspris*, pp. 24-29.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 30–33.

development, that is, the development of the whole man and of all men, as subversion and communism⁴⁶.

Dom Helder scandalized an era by abdicating the luxury of the Manguinhos Palace to go live until his death at the back of the Church of the Frontiers, on Henrique Dias Street, in Recife; He denounced in detail the system of imprisonment and torture in Brazil, a primary tool of investigation for National Security; he thus became an enemy of the dictatorship and was banned for many years from speaking in the media, as he himself emphasized: attacks possible, defense impossible⁴⁷; he was accused by his opponents of being complicit with Marxism, an ideology considered contrary to Christian principles; and yet he became the most well-known figure of the Catholic Church in the world.

Finally, Dom, who in April 1978, speaking to Status Magazine, exclaimed:

Subversive... Communist... When they call me a communist, I say: You don't understand anything. I would be playing the game of communism if I continued to use the Church as the opium of the people; if I continued to speak of Christ as Savior only for eternal life. Of course Christ is the Savior and there is eternal life. But eternity begins here. Don't tell me that my archdiocese has two million souls. Incarnate souls. Souls inside bodies. I don't have souls; I have men! And men who need to eat; and men who need homes; and men who have a right to education; and men who have a right to

⁴⁶ 623rd Circular, Recife, December 6-7, 1969. In: ROCHA, Zildo; SIGAL, Daniel (Eds.). **Dom Helder Câmara: Post-Conciliar Circulars**, v. IV, t. IV, p. 275.

⁴⁷ 636th Circular, Recife, 31.12.1969/01.01.1970. In: ROCHA, Zildo; SIGAL, Daniel (Eds.). **Dom Helder Câmara: Post-Conciliar Circulars**, IV, vol. IV, p. 338.

work. Men who don't need charity, they need justice!

4. CONCLUSION

This article has shown that the actions strategically carried out by people linked to the diplomatic bodies of the military regime worked against Dom Helder Camara to erase his legacy of fighting for justice and peace.

The primary sources we had access to demonstrate a methodically articulated plan with well-defined objectives, formulated so explicitly in official Brazilian documents that they show how much Dom Helder's biography bothered the regime.

In practice, his struggle only increased resistance against the authoritarian government, which saw in his testimony and speeches in international forums one of the most remarkable voices of the late 20th century. To this day, Dom Helder is the only Brazilian honored on all five continents.

His name is associated with the struggle and reconquest of democracy in Brazil, democratic resistance in Latin America, and liberation theology. His spiritual example is in the process of being recognized by the Vatican through an ongoing request for beatification.

Recording these serious episodes in our recent history in Brazil is a duty and, at the same time, a way of fighting to ensure that such cruel persecution against a citizen who defended only the sovereignty of the law under the dictates of dictators never happens again.

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