

Report from Rio by Silvia Palacios

Papal 'law' in Brazil

The Vatican has escalated its campaign against the "theolib" heretics, choosing Brazil as the battleground.

The naming of Brazilian bishop Lucas Moreira Neves to the archbishopric of the city of Salvador, and thereby the new Primate of Brazil, is the culmination of a series of measures that Pope John Paul II has adopted in Brazil—the largest Catholic country in the world, with 350 bishops—to contain the activities of that new heresy, the twisted Theology of Liberation.

The Vatican has been so relentless on the question that the leaders of the so-called Marxist-Christian dialogue, like Leonardo Boff, Fr. Betto, and some of the bishops who support them, have resorted to outright blackmail, threatening to lead a schism within the Church.

Boff and Betto were in Moscow in early July, where they praised the Russian Orthodox Church and insisted that they had found "signs of the City of God" in the Soviet Union.

They say they plan to be back in the Soviet Union next year, to participate in a celebration of the 1,000 years of Christianization of old Russia, a date which the Soviet hierarchy has set as the beginning of a new era that would convert Moscow into the capital of the Third and Final Roman Empire.

Determined to confront this threat, the Vatican has moved, after an eight-month vacancy in the historic archdiocese of Salvador, to nominate Bishop Moreira Neves to the post. Salvador's cultural importance resides in the fact that it was the first diocese created in the country, in 1551; it is both the origin of all Brazilian cardinals and a symbol of Catholic

evangelization for the Ibero-American continent.

Bishop Moreira Neves, cousin and collaborator of the deceased president-elect Tancredo Neves, has tremendous support and respect throughout Brazil. Prior to his new appointment, he held the post of secretary of the Congregation of Bishops at the Vatican.

An ally of Pope Paul VI and John Paul II, he remained at the Holy See for 13 years. In 1974, by the mandate of Paul VI, he assumed the vice-presidency of the Lay Council, and after 1979 worked in the Congregation of Bishops.

As a representative of the opinions of both Popes, Moreira Neves defined his new mission in an interview with the daily *O Estado de São Paulo* thusly: "The Pope told me: There must be law in Brazil. Not that very long ago, Pope Paul VI had told me: I need law in Rome."

The future Primate of Brazil was explicit in establishing the method whereby he expected to contend with the liberationists' new challenge. In unison with Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and with John Paul II, Moreira Neves declared:

"There are two tendencies in the Theology of Liberation. There is one which the Pope considers opportune and necessary, and which is proper to the doctrine of the Church, and then there is the tendency which is proper to Marxist analysis, and therefore unacceptable."

The reforms and changes undertaken by the Church in Brazil began earlier. The clearest case was in July

of 1985, when Bishop Helder Camara, of the important northeastern city of Recife, was replaced by Bishop José Cardoso Sobrinho, who is much closer to the Pope in his battle to protect the values of Western culture so despised by the theologians who flock to Moscow.

In the various messages that the Pope has sent to the Brazilian bishops council, his purpose is clear. One of the most renowned—which prompted outrage from Leonardo Boff and company—was delivered to a meeting of the Brazilian National Bishops' Conference (CNBE) in the village of Itaiçá, in 1986.

Through a personal emissary, John Paul II enumerated the challenges facing the bishops gathered there. One of these was the proliferation of fundamentalist, non-Christian sects, whose promoters, from Teddy Roosevelt to the Rockefeller banking family, were earlier identified by Cardinal Ratzinger. Another was the misery and poverty in which Brazilians live.

There was also a third: the correct interpretation of the so-called theology of liberation: "The theology of liberation, as a theology for all time, and in full adherence to the theology of the Church, offers preferential love that neither excludes nor is exclusive of the poor."

By contrast, the so-called "People's Church" promoted by Boff's "theolibbers" zealously seeks to provoke class hatred.

While this "church" of the Marxist-Christian dialogue still has its protectors in Cardinals Aloísio Lorscheider and Paulo Evaristo Arns, with these latest measures of the Vatican, the proponents of the "People's Church" who have turned Brazil into a center of cultural subversion against genuine Christian faith, are steadily losing ground.