

Brazil rebels against televised immorality

by Silvia Palacios

On Jan. 13, influential Cardinal Lucas Moreira Neves, the archbishop of Salvador (Bahía) and primate of Brazil, issued one of the most courageous and violent attacks that have ever been made against the imbecility fostered in the Brazilian people by Brazil's television programming.

In particular, he slammed the broadcasts of the O Globo chain, owned by communications magnate and loyal Anglo-American ally Roberto Marinho. The cardinal's powerful denunciations helped to channel the outrage the country has felt since last month's satanic assassination of Daniella Perez, a popular star in one of O Globo's most famous soap operas. Perez's assassins were fellow soap-opera star Guilherme de Padua and his wife.

The cardinal's courageous stance and moral authority served as much-needed oxygen for a people which urgently needs to free itself from the rot served up 24 hours a day by Brazilian television, whose programmed pornography, violence, and hedonism appeal to pure evil and target the most precious values of the nation-state, such as love of family and country.

Thousands of copies of the cardinal's article, *J'accuse!* which was published in *Jornal do Brasil* (see below) are now circulating among civic and political organizations, and within the Armed Forces. The editors of *Jornal*, as well as other newspapers, continue to receive thousands of letters praising the courageous stand of the influential cleric. Articles continue to appear daily in various newspapers referring to the now-famous article.

At the same time, an anonymous leaflet with an epitaph for O Globo director Roberto Marinho has begun to circulate throughout the country. Before this revolt, Marinho, along with other Ibero-American television impresarios, was considered "untouchable"; an all-powerful shaper of public opin-

ion who could decide the political fate of any public figure he chose; his most scandalous intervention was the manufacture of the multimillion-dollar candidacy of corrupt ex-President Fernando Collor de Mello.

Media moguls on the defensive

But his time has come, and now Marinho and company are on the defensive. During the last week of January, 120 executives of the O Globo network held an extraordinary meeting to reevaluate their programming, for the purpose of "moderating" the transmission of pornographic or extremely violent scenes, which most programs usually intensify on the eve of the degenerate Carnival of Rio de Janeiro. So far, not one voice has been raised in public defense of O Globo.

By unleashing a rebellion against the immoral power of television, Cardinal Lucas Moreira Neves has taken up the battle cry that St. Irenaeus, one of the Fathers of the Catholic Church, issued during his ferocious battle with the powerful gnostic-satanic movement of the fourth century: "When a beast hides in the undergrowth, from which it attacks and plunders, whoever clears away that undergrowth and reveals the beast eases the job of those who seek to trap it. . . . We are not content to unmask it; it is necessary to harass the beast on every flank."

J'accuse!

Dom Lucas Moreira Neves's article follows in a full translation from the Portuguese original:

From Emile Zola's public polemic I am only plagiarizing the title—and, if possible, the vehemence. Beyond that, I am not trying to revive the scandalous Dreyfus case. My *J'accuse* is against Brazilian television. And I launch my accusation both



"I accuse Brazilian television of corrupting minors through programs of the lowest moral caliber, through scenes and vocabulary used during the hours in which children are in front of the magic box"—Cardinal Moreira. These Brazilian street children often band together in gangs for mutual support, as a substitute for the families they don't have.

as a Brazilian concerned for my country and as a bishop responsible for a great number of the faithful.

I do not wish, in any way, to generalize. I am prepared to separate from my accusation the channel dedicated to education and culture and the programs which, on different channels, contribute to the growth and to the cultural and human elevation of the population. That said, and with Brazilian society in general and with parents and educators, and particularly pastors and religious leaders as my witness, I accuse Brazilian television of its many crimes.

I accuse it of systematically and deliberately failing to carry out the functions for which it obtained a concession from the government: to inform, to educate, to cultivate, to make aware, and to entertain. Instead of this, greedy only for its popularity ratings and its advertising income, it doesn't hesitate to appeal to man's basest instincts. Its most serious sin is in regard to education, which is the most fundamental need and demand of our country. With rare and laudable exceptions, Brazilian television not only fails to educate but, with a tinge of perversity, de-educates. Abusing its technical resources, its power of persuasion and of penetration into the homes of the entire country, it destroys what other pedagogical and educational efforts seek to build.

I accuse Brazilian television of dosing its clientele with two ingredients which, curiously, always go together: violence and pornography. The first is offered in movies for all ages. The second reigns in every genre: soap operas,

interviews, so-called comedies, advertising and propaganda clips. Some three years ago, in an article in *Jornal do Brasil*, editor and journalist Sérgio Lacerda charged that, with its flood of pornography, Brazilian television is creating a generation of voyeurs.

I accuse the television of our country of using complicated technology and equipment for the purpose of turning entire sectors of the population into imbeciles, into a generation of mental weaklings. The process becomes especially disturbing when, under the pretext of humor, television is transformed into an instrument of mis-education, where bad taste, idiocy, and ridicule are showered upon children and adolescents. Regarding humor in television, few have done as profound an analysis as Moacyr Werneck de Castro, who considers it a true regression to infancy, by means of "a repertoire of vulgarities" (*Humor na televisão, Jornal do Brasil, 7/6/91*).

I accuse Brazilian television of being destructive of the most genuine and inalienable moral values, be they personal or social, familial, ethical, religious and spiritual. Destructive not only because it makes fun of these [values], but because they are dissolved in the conscience of the television viewer. In their place are proposed the worst counter-values. In this sense, the daily business of demolishing the family and the highest of family values—love, fidelity, mutual respect, selflessness—is frightening. In their place we are offered libertinism and dissolution, adultery and incest.

I accuse Brazilian television of corrupting minors through programs of the lowest moral caliber, through scenes and vocabulary used during the hours in which children are in front of the magic box.

I accuse it of assaulting the most sacred thing of all, life. Not many days ago, in a rebroadcast of a dialogue between the announcer and a 20-year-old girl, thousands of spectators saw and heard the most explicit apology for abortion and incitement for the suppression of human life at birth.

I accuse it of disseminating, through different programs, ideas, beliefs, practices and rites linked to the strangest cults. It becomes, in this way, a vehicle for spreading magic, including black magic, Satanism, and rituals harmful to psychic balance.

I accuse television of infiltrating into its programming and inducing in television viewers—including youth and adolescents—a concept of life lacking in any ethics: a triumph of malice, theft, easy money, fraud. In this sense, Brazil's soap operas merit a separate analysis from the psychosocial, moral, and religious point of view. When was the last time that a Brazilian soap opera addressed themes like the street

children who have no roof over their heads, or work; the marginalized, in general? Which soap opera has proposed noble ideas of service to one's fellow man and of building a better community? Instead of this, the soap operas offer an impoverished population the attractively packaged adventures of a decomposing bourgeoisie as a model and ideal.

Finally, I accuse Brazilian television of instigating violence: "Brazilian television will have to seek within itself the causes of the violence which it unleashed, and of which it was victim" (Editorial *Estrelas cadentes*, *Jornal do Brasil*, 1/6/93). "It has already been pointed out that the growth of the television monopoly coincides with the growth of violence in the country, and we'll never get to the crux of the issue as long as television itself refuses to accept its responsibility" (Editorial *Limites da dor*, *Jornal do Brasil*, 1/8/93). It cannot look for an alibi when that violence produces bitter fruit. Who killed a young actress a few days ago? It would be ingenuous not to send Brazilian television to the dock of the accused. The 8 o'clock soap opera. And—I feel I must say it—specifically the soap opera *De cuerpo y alma* ("With Body and Soul").

In memory of Daniella Perez

The following "Epitaph for the Director of Globo Organizations, Roberto Marinho" has been circulating anonymously in Brazil, and reflects the vehemence of the popular rage now turning against the media:

Roberto Marinho

Damn you

For the immense good
you might have done, but didn't.

Damn you

for the sea of filth, pus, and blood
you have poured over these poor generations,
invading and profaning
the sanctity of their homes
and the intimacy of their consciences!

All those whom you dragged into hell,
in this and in the other life,
through the poison of your programs
shall await you at the entrance of the abyss.
The unconsolable tears

of countless mothers.
The belated shame
of so many lost youth.

The irremediable putrefaction
of countless bodies and souls,

Go with you,
reprobate,
to the final damnation you deserve!

Now go!

Disinfect the world
of your nauseating slaughter,
of your sordid cynicism,
of your cheerful depravity,
and your satanic hatred for
all that is beautiful, great and pure
in the human heart!

"It were better that you had not been born!"
(PITY!
God's mercy is far greater than all your crimes!)

* * *

The same thing could be written on the graves of Bloch (TV Manchete and Edições Bloch), CIVITA (Editora Abril), Silvio Santos, and others.