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FROM : Amconsul RECIFE
SUBJECT : Dom Hélder Calls Upon Catholic Jurists to Promote
Social Justice on Worldwide Scale
REF :

Attached is an informal translation of the text of an address delivered in Dakar on December 5, 1968, by Recife Archbishop Dom Hélder Câmara inaugurating the Sixth International Congress of Christian Jurists sponsored by the Rome-based International Society of Catholic Intellectuals.

Dom Hélder opened his three-part address by calling upon jurists of the developed world to put aside abstractions and burdensome legal concepts and to engage themselves fully in the day-to-day defense of justice; to attack "international trusts" which make true development impossible; and to take the lead in giving worldwide application to the U.S. anti-trust legislation. 1/

Turning then to the jurists of the underdeveloped world, Dom Hélder advises them first to confront the situation in their own countries if they are to have the moral force to criticize the development attitudes of others. Among the problems of the underdeveloped world highlighted by the Recife prelate were: the need to establish effective means of regulating repatriation of capital; the correction of general dishonesty and the need to prosecute profiteers who damage the international reputations of the underdeveloped countries; the widespread disregard of laws which in turn discredit the judicial system; and the need to show youth the hypocrisy of those who seek to maintain the status quo of "domestic colonialisms" and who invoke the cry of anti-communism to defend their own privileges.

1/ The speech contained no direct reference critical of the United States.

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In a prophetic comment which seems to take on added significance in the light of recent events in Brazil, Dom Hélder also notes: "And the situation is aggravated by the presence of groups of militarists who, either consciously or unconsciously, are at the service of the privileged minorities and interpose force against the law."

In the final section addressed to the jurists of both worlds, Dom Hélder warns his audience that the injustices of the world can only be overcome through structural reforms both in the developed and underdeveloped worlds. Basic changes in one world, he notes, cannot occur without corresponding changes in the other.

COMMENT: Although the speech was made more than a month ago, it nevertheless serves as a timely reminder of the influence and prestige of Dom Hélder as a spokesman for the Third World. This is particularly true on the eve of a scheduled trip by Dom Hélder to the United States where he plans to deliver a major address on "Human Rights and Liberties in the Americas" at the CICOP (Catholic Inter-American Cooperative Program -- an annual meeting of Church prelates from the United States, Canada, and Latin America) conference in New York from January 23-26. Dom Hélder will then travel to Cambridge at the invitation of Harvard University to speak on "The University and the Armed Forces" (see Recife 14).

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Enclosure a/s

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- THE BISHOP'S SPEECH IN DAKAR -

On making the inaugural address to the 6th World Congress promoted by the World Catholic Jesuitic Secretariat, D. Hélder Câmara approached again the problem of social injustice, on a world scale, attacking international trusts and stressing the struggle of underdeveloped countries. In its entirety, D. Hélder's speech was as follows:

I - The Weight of Tremendous Responsibility

If all men and, above all, all Christians have duties towards right and justice, what about you, Christian Jurists? As jurists, your entire life must be dedicated to proclaiming right and fighting for justice. As Christian jurists, the responsibility you carry on your shoulders becomes tremendous. At this time of injustices on a world scale, of confused days when one is almost tempted to think that right will always be treaded on by force, it is an appealing possibility and an adventure worthy of transforming life, to be what you are and what you always seek to be: Christian jurists.

I wish, first to address jurists of developed countries and then those of underdeveloped countries, to express here appeals that are far from being just phrases in the air: they derive from actual experience, the difficult experience of millions of children of God who, not rarely, have been reduced to a subhuman situation. I consider myself as lending voice to those who suffer and have no way to proclaim their own suffering; they feel exploited and have no means of confronting their exploiters and therefore end up in a state of quasi-fatalism of one who gives the impression of fulfilling a preordained fate of suffering here on earth, the price, perhaps, of an eternal reward.

II - Fraternal Message

a) to jurists of developed countries

Whatever, in everyday life, your personal task may be, you are certainly aware of the most serious warning of the "Populorum Progressio": in our time, it is not enough to think of injustices among individuals, or among groups, but among nations and worlds.

When the assistance received by underdeveloped countries is compared with the losses suffered by them as a consequence of the deterioration of the prices of their raw materials being traded with developed countries, and when investments made by developed countries in underdeveloped countries

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are compared with the money that returns to developed countries, one can understand that, in fact, injustice has assumed, in our time, planetary proportions.

Is it not apparent then to you, that in addition to your routine duties there is one of matchless gravity and of exceptional urgency: that of denouncing the injustice in the relations between the developed world and the underdeveloped world. Since justice is the indispensable foundation of peace, international injustices place peace in the world in constant and increasing danger.

I wish, however, to alert you to a very understandable temptation of eminent jurists: do not be content with just denouncing with firmness and serenity the injustices between world and world. The time has arrived when the jurist, unafraid of losing the serenity of magistrates, must set the example of engaging himself fully in the defense of justice until it has been fully respected.

And you should be on the alert to denounce frauds and tricks that escape people of good faith, not familiar with the malice of profiteers. When, for instance, you prove that, in the relationships between developed and underdeveloped countries, the case is not of assistance but of justice, many will propose to pay higher prices for the raw materials from underdeveloped countries; however, they will see to it that the additional payment will ^{not} come from a cut in their abusive profits, but from the people's purse, which makes this measure immoral and criminal.

Am I demanding that the jurists abandon their specific field and invade the sphere of publicity and of public revenue? I dream of jurists moving not amidst abstractions, or living in the clouds, but marching firmly on the ground of men -- humble, glorious, and slippery...

I demanded justice in the relationships with underdeveloped countries, but made it clear that the justice to be done, instead of being a drain on the people, should be a cut in the excessive profits of the powerful.

Would it be daring too much to ask if all of you, jurists - note that I mean all of you - realize enough of what international trusts represent to humanity? International trusts have no country of their own, have no insides ... They are the actual Lords of the World, who have promoted so many wars and coups d'état.

The fight that is imperative to wage against them would have an enormous moral force if it were led by eminent jurists -- men whose lives are oriented to justice. Trusts make true development impossible - development of the complete man and of all men. Wherever they are established - and they are established throughout the world - they promote economic growth for a very reduced number of nationals, who ally with them to exploit

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their own contemporaries. And, in any country, there are many that, like King Herod, ally with their invaders: they are herodians.

Why do not you jurists working in international organizations take the initiative to give worldwide dimension to the anti-trust law that the United States, on a national level, insisted upon establishing? Am I expecting something more than you can give? If you saw what my eyes see, if you witnessed what everyday occurs around me, you would understand my insistence. What would Amos, Isaiah, and Jeremiah say if they lived today in Asia, Africa, or Latin America? What would Christ say if He were speaking to us this morning?...

Have you noted that 20 years after the solemn United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, almost all of these rights continue being abused in the underdeveloped countries? Do you know that in many instances the foreign policy and trade policy of the developed countries are responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the disregard of human rights throughout the Third World?

b) to jurists of underdeveloped countries

Now, I turn to you, jurists of the underdeveloped countries: there are specific missions that are incumbent upon you. Have you already felt the necessity to confront sins of the underdeveloped countries, as an essential condition for our having moral force to establish requirements before the developed world? Europe and the U.S.A. know that there are rich people in the underdeveloped countries who, instead of risking their money in development projects, keep their dollars in numbered accounts in banks of Switzerland and North America. Wouldn't you discover an effective and democratic way to repatriate this money, to make it serve our development effort?

We all know that one of the strongest hindrances to the attainment of a more expensive and more intelligent policy for an opening for the underdeveloped world is the reputation of dishonesty attached to underdeveloped countries. Are our peoples really dishonest? Not our peoples. But there are, in our countries, profiteers who make fortunes through fraud and then bring their sad reputation to cover the entire population. Would it be inappropriate, would it be inglorious to ask you to find measures to single out these evil patriots who, with their false and ignoble attitude, compromise the good name of their own country?

Another sin which, although not a monopoly of our underdeveloped world, is very frequent in our areas is that of demoralizing our laws through their nonobservance. Let me denounce to you two most serious cases in this area:

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- Would it be news to you to say that there are countless, ingenious frauds involving the profits remittance laws?
- Would it be news to you to say that, not infrequently, in our countries, the governments pass laws for reforming structures and then establish agencies to apply these laws but, in the end, everything remains just on paper?

Please, do not say that the application of laws is incumbent on the Executive Branch and that violation of laws is the responsibility of the Police. Can you be indifferent to the discredit of laws? And the main cause for the erosion of laws is the fact that they exist and are not applied.

In the case of structural reforms, youth ultimately has the feeling of farce, of lack of seriousness, at least in Latin America, and is beginning to resort to radicalism and violence.

Youth blusters, above all, at the hypocrisy of those interested in the maintenance of domestic colonialisms (small groups of privileged people whose fortune is maintained to the detriment of millions of their contemporaries) which invoke, to defend their own privileges, such reasons as the combat of communism, disorder, and anarchy. Put your moral force to the task of unmasking these farces.

And the situation is aggravated by the presence of groups of militarists who, either consciously or unconsciously, are at the service of the privileged minorities, and interpose force against the law. Subtly, but also firmly, take it upon yourselves to unmask what there is of disorder, injustice and inhumanity in the false order that they judge themselves obliged to defend; denounce the abuses and ignominies committed by the imperialisms of the two great blocs; the use of banners such as anti-communism, anti-semitism, and other "antis," manipulated as pretexts to maintain inhuman structures and hidden interests.

- c) to jurists of the two worlds: the developed and the under-developed worlds

Jurists of the developed and underdeveloped worlds, with your culture, with your experience and with your astuteness you have already perceived that you can only attempt to satisfy the appeals I have made to you -- which, in a certain way, are no news to you, but probably, in a more or less explicit way have been bothering your consciences -- you can only meet the requirements posed by the injustices of the world before you by reformulating structures not only in the developed countries but even, as unbelievable as this may seem, in the developed countries, with a view to perfecting human coexistence.

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Imagine a country with 3,800,000 estates, with a total of 400 million hectares, has almost half of this area, exactly 180 million hectares, in the hands of 1% of the landowners ... Further, imagine that of these 3.8 million holdings, more than 2.5 million are uneconomic small holdings - easy and tempting prey to the large estate owners...

Tell me, in a country like that, typical of the Latin America situation, are land reforms not urgently necessary?

Imagine a country whose government is multiplying elementary schools and endeavoring to meet the needs of secondary and university education, but in which 88% of the children leave elementary school prior to the 4th year, despite the utopia of elementary education being mandatory... Tell me: a country like that -- typical of the Latin American situation, is it not in need of altering its economic-social and political-cultural structures? You will have already realized, in view of the facts cited here, that it would be easy to multiply data of different categories, all of them showing that it is not enough to replace men and that timid superficial reforms will prove ineffective.

It is clear that no underdeveloped country will manage effectively to solve its own unjust and obsolete structures, without frightening the developed countries that maintain it in their area of influence, I would not say directly as a colony, but certainly, as a satellite... Soon, there would appear talks about the endangering of order (as if order would be the crying injustice that maintains 2/3 of the population in subhuman condition), in the danger of subversion and communism...

The truth, my dear jurists, is that the change in structures in the underdeveloped world supposes, necessarily, structural changes in the developed world. Otherwise, how would we manage, for instance, to reach the structure of a corporation, or how could we achieve justice in international trade balances?

Jurists would render a noted service to human kind, if they were to make evident to all the truth of this assertion and arrive at the welcome formulation of new structures for the world there and here.

Those jurists of the developed world who may be astonished at the inclusion of developed countries as those being in need of structural changes, should recall the deep lesson of "Populorum Progressio" that both to accomplish the development of the complete man and all men, and as an effort towards the integral development of man, the union of everyone is essential to reach the combined development of mankind.

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Would it be fantastic to imagine a new juridical order - in close touch with a new educational and religious order - capable of following the rapidity of changes underway in other sectors of society? How to regulate the atomic race, the use of nuclear weapons and systems of guided missiles, the use of lethal rays and gases? And also we should by now be on the alert for the consequences of space landings.

A new maturity in human history agile enough to, in view of unexpected situations, arrive rapidly at solutions to improve international solidarity, is now and will always be required. How could we make mass media into instruments to form free opinion and criticism, rather than using them to manipulate group interests and ideological propaganda? How could a personal and active participation be achieved, in view of problems generated by bureaucracy, by the impersonal technology of power, where no more personal responsibility exists, and decisions are dissolved (scattered) and neutralized? How could human creatures be prepared to face problems of utilitarian mentality which disregards the meaning of things and only values those with lucrative purposes?

How could law be brought to an attitude of understanding and respect before the civil disobedience and even civil usurpation of the peaceful? Unless it is a mistake, the way is neither in the direction of Kant and the neo-kantians, nor of Hegel and the neo-hegelians. Who knows whether perhaps this is the time for the great affirmation of juridical personalism?

III - Indebted to Africa and Asia

My dear jurists: permit me, for an instant, a personal evocation which will become the final meditation for all of us. Each time, on my way to Europe, that I stepped on African soil, my Brazilian heart trembled with a deep emotion: my country, like others of Latin America, is in gravest debt to Africa, - in spite of being Christians, the Brazilians, during three centuries, committed the crime and ignominy of enslaving Africans. This regrettable episode reminds all Christians, that the Whites and Christians scandalized and continue scandalizing our non-Christian brothers of Africa and Asia, with evidence of divisions between us and terrible injustice to them.

Christian jurists: endeavor to erase sad examples of yesterday and today by assuming an attitude of clear support for the underdeveloped world in view of the injustices of which we are a victim. Assume such a clear and decisive position that may even jeopardize your offices and, if need be, your own lives.

What a sad idea our Asiatic and African brothers must keep of the whites and Christians!...Try to create in their eyes a rather different image,

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that far from being a caricature of Christ, may raise, on the contrary, the desire to know by close contact, the Friend of all men, He who, being God's son became a man and died on the cross to save not only the Whites and Europeans, but men of all races, colors, languages and all cultures.

Trans:
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