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Aggiornamento and Works of Liberation

Jose C. Blanco, S.J.

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Texts and Documents

*Aggiornamento and Works of Liberation**

JOSE C. BLANCO, S.J.

THE effort at renewal in the whole Society the world over and the implementation of this renewal in the Philippines can only be that we may put ourselves at the service of man, society and the world. The Jesuit strives for that inner personal freedom of the man of the third mode of humility, so that he may effectively carry out the designs of the Father. This attitude of mind, this climate of soul guarantees both the proper perception of the design as well as the greatness of heart to carry it out.

The proper perception of the design only means that blinding obstacles and inner biases are removed, enabling us to see the design. But the design itself comes from a perception of the Word. And the Word today, as it was in the beginning, is to be found in the inspired experiences put down in the Gospels by those who were taken as instruments for the handing over of the Word. But even those experiences are interpretations of the Faith. As we accept the Word for our times we must be open to all the interpretations alive in the world to-

* Address to Jesuit participants in Aggiornamento Seminar, May, 1972.

day. The reflections of theology are an interpretation itself of Faith.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

One of the deeper and more authentically challenging reflections of theology today is that we discover and discern the word of God in the events of human historical decisions which today are shaping the world. The creative and redemptive designs of the Father are to be read in their contemporary urgency from the current of human decisions and on the impact of these historical decisions upon man. Signs are perceived through patterned differences. If our reflective effort at juxtaposing our perception of the Word in faith exposes the widening distance between the vision of the Kingdom and the reality of dehumanization, this is revelation. This is a sign of the Word. And every revelation is an urgent call to response. More so when that revelation is God's Word.

There is need for further scrutiny of the contemporary situation of the Philippines as existential signs of God's word and design today for us who feel called to be Christians. The Kingdom asserts a community of men aware of their capabilities; having the instruments and goods that spell the fulfillment of their total persons; and moving towards these goals in relationships of perceived dignity, respect, and love. This is promised by the Father; He has initiated this in the Church and in the community that Christ founded. The community is not the Kingdom. The community is the Father's contemporary outreach to work out more and more fully what He has initiated in the Son. The space-time dimensions of the world and of man are the confines of the Kingdom. It excludes no one except those who perceive and openly reject incorporation into the unity.

RESPONDING TO THE SIGNS

If the Father makes us perceive the distance between attainment of the goals of the Kingdom and the stark reality of dehumanization, He is telling us the response must be found in lines that answer situations of dehumanization. One does

not begin to take seriously and effectively the building of the Kingdom and its insertion in the here and now where those who make up the community are not persons, not human.

The human historical act or decision becomes an act of faith and hope and love as it relates to the wiping away of inhumanities and builds fully the Kingdom of man. One does not make a genuine act of faith in the God who creates and saves and humanizes, who does not throw himself into these same acts of creating, liberating, and humanizing.

LIBERATION CRUCIAL

And now we come to the crux of the question when we begin to ask what are these creating and liberating and humanizing acts which authenticate and deliver our acts of faith from sterility?

Speaking for the Philippine situation dehumanization predominates because the decisions of Filipinos in power have set up structures which effectively deprive the greater number of Filipinos from both access to the goods necessary for a full human life as well as the voice and the power to make known their dehumanized condition.

Against this structure of power and dehumanization, which has very effectively also interiorized this dehumanization in patterns of behavior and acquiescing attitudes of conformism, we must begin the painful task of battering this mode of acceptance and, in small but ever multiplying scale, of organizing the powerless in effective groups that will eventually batter down this structure of injustice and dehumanization.

NEEDED: AN IDEOLOGY

A statement of an ideology is necessary. One which becomes the basis for all the kinds of decisions and actions that we take or do not take. This ideology derives from faith and from the perceived conditions of man that we have experienced. It takes into account the vision of man and society; it has an implicit critique of the existing situation; and it defines the

methods it shall take to move towards the vision. The following is an attempt.

SOCIAL CONCEPT OF PROPERTY

The society we want to approximate guarantees that man shall have the right to the use and ownership of the goods necessary for his total social fulfillment. The society that we want declares that the right to the basic goods takes precedence over the right to own over and above what one needs for his own basic needs.

There is a social sharing of the collective wealth; but there is also a social sharing of the lack of collective wealth as we make the necessary adjustment and effort to arrive at abundance and plenty. The society that we want uses power and authority towards the equalization of opportunities and eventual availability of goods.

In the society that we want, the Filipino works not for his family only nor for a corporation but for the community and the nation such that the products of the work of each shall be made available for increasing the capacities of others to work and to make for them available job-opportunities. Each able producing Filipino is socially responsible for the widest opportunities of sharing and producing.

PROPERTY DESCRIBED

The society that we want guarantees to the individual family a home and a residential lot. In forfeit of a lot, a residence which the family truly owns, and does not have to rent. Renting a home is already dehumanization. Work shall be the title to further accumulation of property. Thus no one shall own who does not wish to work when he can or can be made to acquire skills for work. Such too that one shall not be deprived of income by reason of not having acquired the skill or not having the necessary investment.

Family farms shall be made available to those who are willing to till the land. The size shall be such that it will really be profitable for the family to run whether they operate the

farm on an individual basis or under cooperative farming. Farms that are not tilled are surrendered back to public trust.

The society that we want shall institute a system of education that inculcates this social concept of property and its inherent social responsibilities. It shall, moreover, give to the individual citizen the skills in keeping with his native talent as well as the researched needs of the total nation or of the local community. Since the people are the greatest resources the use of available capital shall be put to the acquiring of skills and the creation of opportunities for the use of those skills. Capital shall not be allowed to move out of the country where the above combination of skills, education and job-opportunities are not yet fully met.

LABORERS: OWNERS

Where those with qualified skills are made to work in an enterprise or service, the remuneration shall be such that the worker shall be able to acquire other property beyond those needed for his basic needs and that of his family. Moreover, in every enterprise the workers shall be given the opportunity to buy stocks or shares in said company. They shall be so informed and educated as to be able to represent their own association of workers and thus take part in the policy making and decision making of their companies or enterprises.

A guarantee of the above must be written into the policy statements of the companies, corporations, and enterprises. And we will just say in passing that the social conscientization of workers and their organizing for power are of primary importance.

WEALTH BELONGS TO ALL

The total wealth and resources of the country belong to all the people. As such what has already been extracted and made liquid must be so used and invested as to bring about the greatest good to the greatest number. This precludes the arbitrary decisions of family corporations or companies from investing sums into quick returns but which deprive people

of wider job opportunities or shares in profits and returns. The number of people and their ever growing opportunities for sharing through work and education shall be the criteria for capital investment.

The natural resources of the country, like the forests, the mines, fishing grounds, etc., shall not ever become private property. These shall be used and worked not in view of family or corporation profits, but in view of increasing the patrimony of the whole people. The workers part sharing in the investments shall be the primary acceptors of the wealth from our natural resources.

To guarantee further distribution of wealth, and to make funds available for the promotion of the common good which is the task of the state, taxation must be proportionate; such that the more capable by virtue of their income shall bear the greater burden of upkeep of the public trust and services.

A TRULY REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Since economic power is in the hands of those who have money, and since in our present context government does not only not check this power, but tends itself and is used for further oppression and dehumanization, it is a very important work to conscientize all who are victims of this power: to make them see how they are being victimized and oppressed; to motivate them to act and to refuse to cooperate any further.

This organizing to render government responsive and to replace it with one truly representative of the people and this pitting power in numbers against economic power will demand a lot of education and continuous effort at conscientization.

NEW VALUES TRANSMITTED

Right here one begins to realize how radical are the changes that must be brought about; how radically the thinking, concepts, and attitudes of all the people on all levels must change. So we come to state what institutions of change and formation must be put up and initiated.

We are thinking primarily of schools, but what we have to say of schools must also hold true of all media of communication. Every single institution of education and communication must be made to transmit the above values as well as the necessary skills to carry them out and effect the changes little by little in an integrated fashion. The goals and aims of our schools must be guided by what has been stated above.

The creation of a society where men work responsibly to make available for others what they need to arrive at a total social fulfillment. Under this rubric from the earliest years to the finishing graduates, the social concept of property must be inculcated and opportunities given to all to see how their talents and training can and must be put to use so that we can bring about the society that we want. Curriculum will not only be adapted. They will have to be radically changed and re-examined. Since teachers are crucial in the transmission of values, they must be given reorientation; in fact they will have to learn over again. We would hazard the need as well as the value of the creation of teams for orientation towards the new society. Analysts of the Philippine situation; a theologian, who grounded on the analyzed condition, helps to clarify the vision; skillful organizers, tacticians, and methodologists; and a group of pedagogists and communications men.

Textbooks and methods will have to be revised in the wake of the total and radical changes that have to be brought about.

These are the agenda for the reorientation and redirection of our educational ministries.

MANIFESTO IN ACTION

Ideology or a statement of the society we want is a necessity. But so is a manifesto in action. The Society as a whole must support a fight in favor of the oppressed and show that it is throwing in its resources and men into the work of liberation.

The work of liberating the sugar cane workers in Negros is an awesome task. It is difficult to guarantee success. Per-

haps this has to be explained. Success does not mean in the early stages in works of liberation that the exact goals and benefits we are looking for will be granted or obtained; nor does it mean that the people who are suffering become a plaything, if we do not guarantee them total success. No, while we genuinely work to get for the oppressed the goods that they have a right to and deserve, an essential concomitant must be the declaration in public of the ideology we stand for. That our basis for works of justice and liberation are based on a vision and on clear statements of what we feel is the humane and fulfilling society we all want to move towards.

Perhaps, we can tone the proposition down. The Province should allow men to shift their ministry and emphasis towards works of liberation. Those who feel they want to throw their weight and talent in this direction will be given the necessary retraining and the finance for operational work and activity set aside. And those who wish to participate in the Institute of Social Order's thrust for liberation be allowed to sign up and side actively with what we shall collectively decide as our works of liberation.

A JUDGMENT

The ineffectivity of the Society since it decided to reconsider its works and ministry some five or six years ago comes to this: we have not made up our mind that the Philippine society as it exists is unchristian and inhuman; and so we have not come up with an alternative and we continue to delude ourselves that we can work for the glory of God and the Kingdom by operating more efficiently within the given structures no matter how unjust they are. Justice we said is what we want to effect. But the majority of our works do everything except to carry out the works of justice. And this is the second reason why we have been totally ineffective.

Since the urgency of the works of liberation and justice seem to be in proportion as Jesuits have participated in and

tasted the results of dehumanized existence, let at least those who feel the urgency have their share of support within the Province. And those who honestly wish to share and experience the life of oppression be given this as a priority assignment. We feel that those who wish to discern but have not participated in the results of the life of oppression have very inadequate data to really feel within the depths of their being the movements that will indicate God's design in the here and now. A minimum of honesty is needed to discern. And honesty here means access and experience of the existential word of God as he speaks in the desperation and hopelessness of the greater number of Filipinos.

INTEGRATING WORKS

For the consistency and impact of our total Jesuit forces, what we mentioned for the educational apostolate and ministry we must also say for our other ministries. In fact each ministry must justify its existence and why it should not be terminated on the score of its carrying out or helping to carry out the radical changes stated above. Our parishes must move to the formation of the above type of Filipinos and Christians; the retreat band must form consciences and groups of men who will translate in their decisions the effective bringing about of the society we want. Every ministry and those ministries must be supported which carry out best this work of radical liberation and justice.

When people set up a new ideology which threatens the security of the existing system, the threatened group of a necessity not only puts up resistance, but marshalls its forces to positively kill the invading ideology. And it does this in the Philippine context through the use of police power in government and the alignment of all the economic blocs. In most instances the two will be a formidable force of opposition and resistance. But like Ignatius we must probe all the weaknesses of the forces of oppression; recognize the friends that we have within who are willing to be radical Christians for authentic radical change. We must look for strategic points of entry.

"HINDSIGHT" IN FUTURE

Against numbers, the few must at some time, we will not say soon, crumble. But that means we must go to where the numbers are: the dehumanized masses. We must ask and invite those who share our vision and ideology to do the same work: conscientize the oppressed, help them get organized. What comfort to the poor and oppressed, what evangelical witness when they see the Companions and the Company of Jesus effectively aligned for their liberation. Against the hesitations and the risks, the uncertainties and the enormity of the task and the challenge, let us look at this situation we are in from the vantage of a "hindsight" in the future. Let not historians write about us three, four, five centuries from now, that we were afraid and took no side for justice and the poor. Let not another 25th century Lenin say, we communists had to be around, because the Christians would not do their work; they did not recognize and carry out their mission.