

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE INTER-AMERICAN PEACE COMMITTEE
ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN
RIGHTS OR THE NON-EXERCISE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY
AND THE POLITICAL TENSIONS THAT AFFECT THE PEACE OF
THE HEMISPHERE
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PEACE OF THE HEMISPHERE

INTER-AMERICAN PEACE COMMITTEE

Special Report on the Relationship Between Violations of Human Rights or the Nonexercise of Representative Democracy and the Political Tensions that Affect the Peace of the Hemisphere.

During the past six months, the Inter-American Peace Committee has been engaged in a series of activities directed at carrying out the mandate given to it by the Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in Santiago, Chile, in August 1959. A major part of the Committee's efforts has been devoted to the study, in accordance with Resolution IV of that meeting, of the questions that were the subject of the convocation of the meeting. This general study has, however, been interrupted by the necessity for attending to a number of specific incidents and cases which have been brought to the attention of the Committee.

In accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned resolution, the Committee will in due course submit to the governments of the member states a preliminary report on the subjects assigned to it, which will serve as a basis for a final report for the Eleventh Inter-American Conference. The schedule for the preparation and distribution of the preliminary and final reports on the Caribbean situation has been altered by the postponement of the Conference. The Committee has, therefore, considered it desirable to prepare this special report on a question of outstanding current interest, namely the theme stated in paragraph 1.b of Resolution IV which reads: "The relationship between violations of human rights or the nonexercise of representative democracy, on the one hand, and the political tensions that affect the peace of the hemisphere, on the other."

The Committee feels further justified in presenting this report at this time by virtue of the fact that it has found this subject to be of fundamental importance to an understanding of the entire problem of the Caribbean and for formulating ways of diminishing the international tensions that have threatened the peace and progress of that region, as well as fraternal relations among the countries therein. The Committee considers it timely, therefore, to bring to the attention of the American governments its views on this problem together with the conclusions which it trusts will receive sympathetic and urgent attention.

The Committee wishes to point out that recent years have witnessed a considerable progress in the development of respect for human rights and the effective exercise of representative democracy in many countries of the Caribbean area. While obvious exceptions still exist, it can be said that recent years have seen the passing of dictatorial regimes and

the gradual or complete institution of democratic procedures, including the organization of opposition parties, together with greater respect for basic political rights, in several countries of the area. This development may be attributed to a number of factors among which the Committee can mention the following:

1. The conviction increasingly held in all the American republics that the respect for human rights and the observance of the fundamental principles of representative democracy play an important part in their mutual relations. This fact has been given solemn recognition in the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man, in the Charter of the Organization, particularly in Articles 5.d and 5.j, and in numerous declarations of inter-American conferences, notably those of the Ninth and Tenth Inter-American Conferences and the Fifth Meeting of Consultation of Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

2. Thus, at this stage of history, no American regime can seclude itself in isolation from the other States of the hemisphere and indulge in antidemocratic practices within its territory, since in so doing it incurs the moral disapproval of the other countries of the Americas. Furthermore the spotlight of publicity, so characteristic of our time, is unflinching cast upon every detail of the actions of governments that violate the principles established by the public opinion of the Americas in the aforementioned documents.

3. The progress that has been realized in furtherance of respect for human rights and the effective exercise of representative democracy may also be attributed in large measure to the popular movement throughout the American republics designed to achieve economic progress in an atmosphere of freedom and social justice. All the peoples of the Americas are intent upon achieving a more rewarding life in both material and spiritual terms, and they recognize the truth of the statement set forth in Resolution XXXII of Bogotá, that "only under a system founded upon a guarantee of the essential freedoms and rights of the individual" is it possible to attain this goal.

The achievement of an effective democracy based upon respect for fundamental human rights is, therefore, an integral part of the supreme goal toward which the peoples of the Americas are dedicating their efforts. In this connection, a further citation may be made from the above-mentioned Resolution XXXII of the Ninth International Conference of American States, as it should be borne in mind that the member states of the Organization, when they subscribed to it in order to "condemn the methods of every system tending to suppress political and civil rights and liberties," were referring not only to "the action of international communism or any other totalitarian doctrine," but also to that of personal dictatorships.

In other words, the peoples of this continent know that absolute power, whatever form it may take or under whatever pretext it is seized, soon ends in moral and political as well as material corruption. Therefore, they increasingly perceive the truth of the statement that the high aims which are sought through the solidarity of the American States require, as proclaimed in Article 5.d of the Charter, their political organization on the basis of the effective exercise of representative democracy which, in turn, must rest upon a guarantee of the rights of man.

The first concrete relationship, therefore, between violations of human rights or the nonexercise of representative democracy, on one hand, and the political tensions which affect the peace of the hemisphere, on the other, rests upon this general conviction. The peoples of America, who are increasingly determined to achieve economic, social and cultural progress, know, furthermore, that solidarity and cooperation among the republics of this continent contribute in large measure to the achievement of this goal; that they are linked by a common idea of the dignity of man resting upon recognition of his basic rights and upon a political system reflecting the public will through the free exercise of political choice; and that, owing to their own political and cultural evolution, they are living in a period of history when the existence of dictatorships of any type is an obstacle to the achievement of their most deeply cherished aspirations.

It is in this context that the more specific effect of the violation of human rights and the nonexercise of representative democracy upon international tensions is to be understood. The existence of dictatorial governments inevitably results in numerous persons fleeing from their countries and taking refuge in other American States. There, because of the deeply held beliefs mentioned above, they find sympathy and moral support. There they can organize movements against anti-democratic regimes which it is not feasible for them to launch in their own countries. These efforts often reach the stage of activities which impinge upon the obligations assumed by the American States under various inter-American instruments for the purpose of preventing the organization of military expeditions against other governments.

When citizens are unable, because of the existence of a dictatorial regime, to effect political change legally and by the ballot, they often resort to force. Threats and actual attempts of invasion of their home lands give rise, in turn, to countermeasures on the part of the anti-democratic regimes. These countermeasures are often directed at the governments of countries which have extended hospitality or political asylum to exiles. Thus, so long as a general sympathy with democratic aspirations exists, the moral support enjoyed by the exiles will continue to be an additional factor in creating or intensifying international tensions. The political tensions resulting from the efforts of persons sincerely striving to promote respect for human rights and democratic procedures, it must be recognized, are sometimes aggravated by the action

of adventurers, mercenaries and others who take advantage of the situation for selfish material ends or for even more repellent purposes.

Certain situations exist in the Caribbean area at this time which aggravate international tensions. Numerous persons are known to be confined in prisons because of their political activities. The large number of exiles existing in all countries of the region creates justified apprehension on the part of their respective governments. In some states, progress toward respect for human rights and representative democracy is obstructed by vestiges of dictatorial rule. In others, governments, on one pretext or another, continue to deny to their citizens the right to freely elect their government which is essential to any representative democracy.

The concern of the Committee with these matters is related to the problem of the maintenance of international peace. It must, therefore, take a firm position in favor of the peaceful achievement, without foreign intervention, of the political goals which the American peoples have set for themselves. Accordingly, the Committee can under no circumstances suggest any formula that would violate the nonintervention principle or the solemn inter-American commitments which have as their aim the preservation of the right of each state to work out its own political destiny. Respecting fully the above-mentioned principle and commitments, the Committee attributes special importance to the moral force of the American community as a means for stimulating the efforts of the citizens within each country to achieve greater guarantees for human rights and a fuller exercise of representative democracy.

In keeping with this line of thought, and as an initial and immediate step which would contribute to a lessening of the tensions in the region, the Committee suggests to the governments of the countries where persons have been imprisoned because of purely political activities, that they be set free. It would also be helpful if the necessary steps were taken as soon as possible to permit all persons who have taken asylum in diplomatic missions to leave the country, provided the states granting asylum guarantee that they will not permit these persons to carry out activities within their respective territories in contravention of any of the inter-American instruments applying in the matter.

Finally, the Committee, aware of the deep significance which the subject matter of this report has for the progress of the peoples of America and for the realization of their noble aspirations for peace and security, freedom and economic and cultural progress, emphasizes as highly important that the countries which may not as yet have done so take steps as soon as possible to establish or strengthen, as the case may be, procedures for the assurance of respect for human rights

and the effective exercise of representative democracy, with particular reference to the principles set forth in the Declaration of Santiago.

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