

THE "RODA VENTURA" JURISTS ASSOCIATION

THE LEGAL EXPERTS WHO MAKE UP THE "RODA VENTURA" ASSOCIATION, BOTH AS JURISTS AND AS CHRISTIANS, ARE CONCERNED FOR THE CORRECT APPLICATION OF THE LAW AND FOR THE EFFECTIVE RECOGNITION OF THE RIGHTS OF ALL INDIVIDUALS AND RACES, IN EVERY FIELD OF HUMAN CO-EXISTENCE.

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In February 1984, when Pax Romana's delegate addressed the 40th session of the United Nations Organization Commission on Human Rights, with a report on the problem of human rights in Chile that drew attention to the repeated violations of human rights and the increase in the use of torture and in the number of missing persons, it marked the beginning of the international projection of the "Roda Ventura" Jurists Association.

The association was founded in Barcelona, in November 1981, by a group of people consisting of members of the legal profession and leading Catalan jurists, within the framework of the Francesc Eiximenis Study Centre, a Catalan organization affiliated to the International Catholic Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs known as Pax Romana. The legal experts who make up the "Roda Ventura" Association, both as jurists and as Christians, are concerned for the correct application of the law and for the effective recognition of the rights of all individuals and races, in every field of human co-existence.

The "Roda Ventura" Association is a member of the International Movement of Catholic Jurists, a specialized branch of Pax Romana-IMCI.

It is named after a famous Catalan lawyer, who died suddenly in 1967, after heatedly defending a group of some twenty Catalan intellectuals who had been arrested for political reasons.

The members of the "Roda Ventura" Association are committed to the concept of a legal system founded on respect for mankind, as a means to individual and collective freedom. Its presence has been requested on numerous occasions, for the services of a fundamentally juridical nature that it has to offer, and as a spokesman for the defence and promotion of human rights and of solidarity between men.

The following stand out amongst its activities:

The creation in 1983 of the Institute of Human Rights, an interdisciplinary organization devoted to the promotion and teaching of human rights.

Regular, active participation in the annual sessions of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Gene-



va, where it speaks on behalf of the non-government organization Pax Romana. Over the years, the "Roda Ventura" Jurists Association has played an important part in these debates, in questions such as the human rights situation in South Africa, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Paraguay, Brazil, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, West Timor, Peru, Haiti, etc. The association has also denounced the use of certain technological methods that are a violation of human rights, as well as the use of certain pharmaceutical pro-

ducts. The association has also played an important part in support of the Convention against torture and the Convention on children's rights. In several cases, the intervention of the Catalan delegates has contributed to the liberation of detainees, as for example P. Mkhatsuva, Secretary of the Episcopal Conference of South Africa, freed a few days after the "Roda Ventura" Jurists Association had presented a documented report to the United Nations.

In Catalonia itself, the "Roda Ventura" Jurists Association has made public demands for answers to a variety of questions on the problem of human rights, such as the situation in the prisons, the position regarding African immigrants living or working in Catalonia, or children's rights.

The members of the "Roda Ventura" Jurists Association have taken part in international fact-finding missions, so as to analyse the human rights situation in different countries, on behalf of International Pax Romana and the International Movement of Catholic Jurists, and in collaboration with other international organizations, such as Sos Torture or the International Federation of Human Rights. It is worth mentioning, amongst others, the fact-finding missions to Chile, Peru and Colombia.

The elaboration of studies and reports on problems related to human rights, such as the modification of the Penal Code and the Criminal Prosecutions Act, the juridical aspects of the refugee statute, the problems of the African workers living in different parts of Catalonia, the Right of Asylum, the protection of minors, conscientious objection and the substitute social service, the prison situation, or the legal problems raised by mental deficiency, amongst others.

In the seven years it has existed, the "Roda Ventura" Jurists Association has earned a level of recognition and prestige which has been consolidated in those international legal circles working in favour of human rights. At the same time, the Catalan jurists of the "Roda Ventura" Association have seen the first fruits of their commitment to the job of counselling, defending, and stimulating public awareness in support of human rights and the rights of nations. ■