

## NEW STRUCTURES, NEW VISIONS: A VISION FOR ACADEME

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As a stand-in speaker I find myself in a most peculiar position: at the venerable age of 30 years or more, here I am going on a blind date. Certainly a blind date is one of the most conventional experiences a person might have and could hardly be the source of new structures, much less a source of a new vision. However, I still cling to the hope that this assignation will not fizzle out, but develop into a promising affair.

Seriously, let us face the task before us, which is the theme of this series, "Strategies for Development." The Philippine Sociological Society should be commended for bringing together specialists and leaders of different institutions to discuss this vital issue in our national life.

There is no need to dwell at length on the concept of development. Everyone seems to be in general agreement that development is a good thing, that it is something to be desired, something to strive for. In essence the word has come to be synonymous with progress, prosperity, and general well-being. I would add to these concepts of development the condition that the benefits of development must reach all sectors and levels of our society, that it should benefit the hitherto most deprived segments of our population, and should improve not only the material aspects of life but also the spiritual. The enrichment of human values should remain the central core of development.

I hope that this is the vision we have in mind when we talk of development. There are, after all, alternative visions. One of them I would designate "super misdevelopment," evidences of which are tragically present today. Best dramatized in the works of George Orwell such as *1984* and *Animal Farm*, we find in these books a society in which efficiency, ex-

pediency, total discipline, and control replace the human values of love, sacrifice, freedom of thought, and imagination.

I would like to believe that as specialists concerned with the study of human society we give little or no support to this type of misdevelopment. There is yet another manifestation of "super misdevelopment," one which is becoming more and more rampant in our midst. This is the confusion of development and the use of advanced technology. Where this confusion exists, technology is pursued for its own sake, and the pursuit is most in earnest where the technology is most advanced and trendy. It is my fervent hope that as social scientists you share with me, an historian, the view that a nation's level of development ought to be measured not by the amount of energy it consumes but by its contribution, and above all to the easing of worldwide tensions.

This is the spirit of development to which we must all commit ourselves. It is not important that we use the latest computer technology, the latest social science methodology, multivariate analysis, ring analysis, or path analysis — only to arrive at what are usually common-sense observations. One need not follow a convoluted methodology to arrive at the conclusion that in some instances people are happy while in another set of circumstances they are unhappy; or that a combination of certain parameters, including high income, leads to a high level of education, which in turn leads to better social status, and thereby gives greater access to economic and political power; or that certain factors, found in combination, are social indicators of a society at the "take-off" stage.

These are rather obvious observations, and can be made without having recourse to high-

powered technology. Where social scientists pursue technology for its own sake, their concern has moved away from people and the problems that instead of concern they have a misplaced fascination with methodology. But the social scientist must address himself to the problems at hand and work to resolve or ameliorate them. What is the answer to poverty and starvation in the midst of plenty? How can our nation survive under the threat of super-power politics? How can we unite our people so that we can solve our problems? These are some of the questions that social scientists must help answer. To do less than this is to engage in careerism and self-aggrandizement.

It is now time to move on to the assignment given to me — to give you an idea of the role and function of the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (PCAS). I must approach the task cautiously for, as you know, the Center is a newly created agency, and details of its nature and its programs are still in the formative stage. We have yet to achieve the distinction of a unique personality. This may be a good thing, for it may enable us to keep the agency as flexible as possible, free of the rigid habits that are often associated with fully mature personalities. In any event, I shall try as well as I can (with apologies to the Chancellor, who is now abroad) to picture for you something as volatile and as ephemeral as the formation of a personality.

The creation of the PCAS reflects the growing need of the government for an agency that can provide research background on, and expert analyses of, current affairs and issues confronting the nation. The *raison d'être* of the PCAS can be best summarized by quoting from Letter of Instruction 179, dated March 29, 1974, which reads as follows:

In view of the need of the national government for a specialized agency consisting of specialists from a wide variety of disciplines that can readily respond to the need of the government for research guidance on problems and issues of highly critical and substantive nature, to provide assessment of national and international developments as they affect the survival and integrity of the nation and to aid

government in the formulation of national policy, the Philippine Center for Advanced Studies (PCAS) has been created by Presidential Decree 342, dated November 22, 1973.

The need for an agency, such as the PCAS, stems from the magnitude and intensity of change in the role of government in modern times, particularly as we move into the close of the twentieth century. At no time has the government been expected to do so much for its citizens as it is in our times. The growing expectations of people that the government ought to work for their welfare must perforce necessitate restructuring its organization and, more importantly, gaining for itself a larger vision. It cannot rely on existing agencies and bureaucracies alone. The complexities of domestic and international issues, whose many linkages may not be suspected at all, need to be analyzed if the government is to make rational judgments. At the same time, the government needs to respond as quickly as possible to conditions, to seek out opportunities, and to prepare for unforeseen eventualities.

The PCAS was therefore created to help coordinate the diverse and urgent needs of the government for expert opinion, particularly as they pertain to Asia, to Socialist and Communist countries, and to policy and program formulations of our country within the context of world events.

The organizational structure of the PCAS reflects to a certain extent the new trails the government is seeking in the domestic and international scene. The emphasis on Strategic Studies, an Institute which concerns itself with problems of national survival, on Islamic Studies and the Middle East, and the accelerated interest in Asian Studies, all of which are intended to work closely with the Institute of Philippine Studies, stress the fact that we live in a complex universe of interrelationships.

At this point, it is important to show the contradistinction of the PCAS from the academic community for, even as it is located within the University, it is a separate and autonomous unit. This is so because the academic community is divided into professional schools and institutions where knowledge is

generally segmented into separate compartments, each area or discipline a jealously guarded region of expertise kept *terra incognita* to those who are outside the field. We hope that the PCAS will aid in off-setting the separateness of specializations and disciplines, rallying the different sectors of the academic community and other agencies to work on common problems and to respond to such calls as quickly as possible, without the undue delay, duplication, and confusion that often results when the various sectors work independently, and when bureaucracy carries on with its age-old standard operating procedures.

So far, I have stressed the role of the PCAS as an agency providing expert knowledge and background for the government in the shortest time possible, but without sacrificing the standard of scholarships. Let me remind you that what I describe is our ideal, and I do not by any means claim that we achieve this ideal all the time. Nevertheless, we do try to fulfill this role "to the limits of our abilities," as the saying goes.

While the PCAS was established as a separate unit within the University of the Philippines System, still its staff remain rooted in the academic tradition of scholarship. Scholarly thinking, that is, the analysis of issues in depth and in all their ramifications, seeing the interconnectedness of phenomena — their social, political, economic, and cultural repercussions — this is a habit of thinking we hope to bring to bear on problems that are brought to our attention and on the problems we ourselves raise. We want to avoid the "either-or" type of thinking, not only because it is narrow but also because it is dangerous to the best interests of our nation and to our best judgments as scholars.

It is precisely these habits of thought, ideally possessed by a staff trained and nourished in the academic community, that provide the reason why the PCAS is located in the University. What we are trying to achieve therefore is a judicious balance between two extreme roles. First, as an agency concerned with the development of our nation the PCAS might be an action-oriented agency, formulating and execu-

ting policy. At the other extreme, it could be a group of detached scholars wrapped up in their theoretical concerns. The wedding of the two roles has led to the formulation of the PCAS; hopefully it may contribute to solving the problems we raised earlier in this paper.

The fact that the PCAS is slowly gaining acceptance shows that its organization and structure do not represent a very great departure from the long-accepted University practice of serving the needs of society-at-large, and even those of the marketplace. Professional schools are the units most closely concerned with these societal issues — the professional colleges such as medicine, nursing, law, engineering have always addressed their curricula, training, and research to the specific needs of the larger community. Indeed, there are only a few remaining enclaves in academe which are still removed from the workaday world — where scholars study extinct societies and languages, for example, or philosophical systems, or obscure periods of history.

I must admit that I am beginning to hanker for the luxurious leisure to peruse historical texts and to study in an atmosphere freed from the chaotic pressures of the present. But I believe that the problems of national development should be our overriding concern. If they do not take precedence over all other interests of the scholar, they must at least merit part of his talent, energy, and commitment. The PCAS is an agency that provides the challenge and opportunity for the committed scholar to pursue his academic interest along with other scholars from different disciplines, with the added dimension of helping his countrymen by illuminating our national and international problems, by seeking to ameliorate them, and by finding the means to solve them.

#### Note

At the time she read this paper, Josefa M. Sanico was officer-in-charge of the Office of the Vice-Chancellor, Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, University of the Philippines System.

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