Freedom and National Development

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I

In a paper entitled "The Colonial Relationship," which I contributed, in 1966, to the American Assembly publication, *The United States and the Philippines,* I made a tentative assessment of the enduring quality of democracy in the Philippines in words that in retrospect were eerily prophetic. After enumerating the principles and practices which the American colonial regime had implanted in the Philippines—individual rights and civil liberties, especially freedom of speech and of the press; independence of the judiciary; separation of church and state; a civil service based on the merit system; representative government based on the popular will; and the rule of law—I pointed out that none of these was indigenous to Asia or to the Philippines. I then added:

> The question remains whether the principles and institutions of Western democracy and representative government...are necessarily adaptable to the experience, character, and aspirations of the great majority of the peoples of Asia and Africa. Amongst many of them, Western political forms have become little more than a transparent mask for authoritarian regimes of one type or another. Amongst others, even such an outward pretense has been discarded, and the reversion to absolute depotism has been complete.

However, I refused to be dismayed by these reversions to despotism in many of the newly independent states of Asia and Africa. I grimly held on to the hope that whatever might have happened in those less fortunate countries, does not have to happen in the Philippines. Bravely yet realistically, I looked into the Philippine future:

> So far as the Philippines is concerned, however, such a regression to pre-Spanish or even to Spanish patterns of political, economic and social organization would be inconceivable. It would be repugnant to the great

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majority of Filipinos, who have come to regard the principles and institutions of democracy as an essential element of their political existence. However, they have no cause for complacency. Although apparently sound and sturdy, these principles and institutions are constantly exposed to attack, erosion and decay. The ancient traditions of oligarchy and authoritarianism lie very close to the surface of Filipino life. The prevailing economic and social system remains hospitable to a recrudescence of these traditions. At the same time, the Constitution of the Republic...sets up one of the most powerful chief executives of any democratic government in the world. While this may be a valid response to the need for national discipline and for a strongly centralized, unitary system of government, it also offers a standing invitation to dictatorship.

As everybody knows, that standing invitation was accepted about six years later, on September 21, 1972 to be exact.

In retrospect, I ask myself why, having so candidly noted the danger signs in the nation's political firmament, I nevertheless tended to minimize them, and instead pretended to harbor an exaggerated optimism that I had no reason to feel. In poring over the political literature of that period, I have a feeling that my optimistic assessment of the enduring quality of Philippine democracy may have been strongly influenced by the prevailing mood of the time. Symptomatic of that mood, to take just one example, was the commencement address (from which we drew excerpts) delivered the same year, 1966, by President Marcos before the graduating class of the University of the Philippines.

> Liberalism is not the truth, but the pursuit of truth. It is the dialogue of free minds in a disinterested search for the truth.
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> And I say, let the search for truth proceed. Let no man obstruct the inquiring mind.
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> It is here at the University of the Philippines where the nation can depend for an objective and dispassionate analysis and evaluation of facts and situations....In an era of mass media, of managed news, of pseudo-events, the people need an anchor of thinking and attitudes that takes a considered view of things.
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> We live in a free society. Freedom and liberty have no other meaning but the development of man to the fullness of his potential.
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> In calling upon you to share in the nation's great adventure...I ask you to use your powers as free men, your resources as free men, your talents as free men. I am calling upon you to be free.

I think you would agree that my optimistic assessment of the future of Philippine democracy, in 1966, was fully consistent with,

and justified by President Marcos's eloquent affirmation of the strength of Philippine democracy, in 1966.

As for the injunction that we should mind what President Marcos is saying today and not what he said in 1966, one must answer that, as recently as January 24, 1975, on the occasion of the oath-taking of Dr. Onofre D. Corpuz as the eleventh president of the University of the Philippines, President Marcos reiterated his high conception of the role of this University, in these words:

> This University has many great traditions...among them are patriotism, freedom from cant and superstition, commitment to the goals of independence. But over and above all these, is the love for the life of the mind. That, to me, is the meaning of a university.
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> The intellectual integrity of the University of the Philippines is paramount. Whatever we may discuss, whatever conflicts we may have, whatever we may argue about, the intellectual integrity of the University of the Philippines must be maintained.
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> If the University is only going to reflect current realities, where will the critical thought—the transforming criticism of society—come from? There has to be a zone of sanity, of clear, uncluttered thought, so that the turmoils can be seen at a distance and hopefully provide an approach to accommodating them or putting them at the service of the society. This the university is ideally suited to do.

In this paper, then, we shall try to undertake a task which, to use words of President Marcos, the university is ideally suited to do. We shall examine some of the crucial dilemmas which confront modern man as he fulfills his destiny, in freedom and dignity, within the context of a developing society. For such a task we shall need, not the art of polemics but the science of illumination; we shall strive for light rather than heat.

II

It has been said of life in general that it consists essentially of the capacity to make choices. It follows that the more freely a man is able to exercise the prerogative of choice, the more truly can it be said of him that he is alive. It also follows that the options open to man increase in direct proportion to the increasing complexity of life itself.

Thus, in primitive cultures, there is no question of a man choosing to work or not to work, to eat or not to eat, to sleep or not to sleep, to make love or not to make love; he has to do these things when and where he can, or he perishes and his kind disappears. By

contrast, modern man has a lavish smorgasbord of options before him, every day and hour and minute of his life; if he wants to work, he may choose to be a tenant in Central Luzon, a sacada in Negros, an executive in Makati or a technocrat in Malacañang; if he wants to eat, he may have his choice of steak *au poivre,* or Peking duck, or sashimi, or lechon, or *pinakbet;* if he wants to sleep he can go to the Hotel Intercontinental, or bed down on a bench in the park or under a bridge; and if he needs love, well, the permutations here are practically infinite.

The higher therefore that man has climbed the ladder of intellectual sophistication,the more subtle the distinction between the options that are laid before him. The alternative options involving freedom and development which I propose for examination are the following: democracy and/or meritocracy, individualism and/or collectivism, conformity and/or dissent, technocracy and/or politics, liberty and/or equality.

These options or dilemmas confronting modern man are, in essence, ideological dichotomies or, if you prefer, philosophical antinomies which oppose or balance or complement each other in the familiar Hegelian format of thesis and antithesis ultimately resolving themselves in synthesis.

First, let us take the dilemma of democracy and/or meritocracy. Abraham Lincoln's classic definition of democracy has not been bettered: democracy is government of the people, by the people, for the people. The United States of America represents the classic example in history of the admirable, if so far only half successful, effort to establish a system of government in which the people delegate their sovereignty to elected representatives, and in which the powers of government are exercised to subserve the interests of the people. Such a system presupposes an individually alert and socially conscious citizenry, wise in the choice of its elected representatives, and alert in ensuring that the latter will respond adequately to the people's needs and aspirations. In actual practice, it has rarely been possible to achieve this level of democratic perfection; as a result, there have been instances of a glaring miscarriage of the popular will, and popularly elected bodies have sometimes betrayed the public interest.

Wherever this form of classic democracy has failed to work, people have often turned to other forms of political organization; monarchy *cum* aristocracy, or dictatorship *cum* meritocracy. The usual justification for these alternative political systems is that, while the masses of the people may have the inherent right to govern

themselves, it is by no means certain that the people really know how to govern themselves. Wherefore, the people must be governed by one man especially trained in the arts of government—a king by divine right, or a despot by superior physical force, or a dictator wielding power in the interest of a group or a class. A monarch is usually assisted by a few ministers and courtiers who constitute the aristocracy, and a dictator by a number of technocrats who constitute the meritocracy. Pure monarchies, however, have become vestigial institutions; in modern times their place has been taken by dictatorships.

The distinction between various forms of government, which is so dear to the hearts of political science professors, serves a useful purpose, provided we bear in mind the wise observation of Thomas Hobbes:

> For they that are discontended under *monarchy,* call it *tyranny;* and they that are displeased with *aristocracy,* call it *oligarchy;* so also, they which find themselves grieved under a *democracy,* call it *anarchy,* which signifies want of government; and yet I think no man believes that want to government is any new kind of government; nor by the same reason ought they to believe that the government is one when they like it, and another when they mislike it, or are oppressed by the governors.

The justification given for meritocracy is this: the people have a right to be governed well, but the art of good government is simply not the specialty of the anonymous mass of the people. Therefore, government must be entrusted to those who have the requisite competence to do the job, those especially trained in the art and science of government. The proposition is basically sound, if for no other reason than that men are simply not equal in abilities or identical in gifts or inclinations. As we go only to a skilled physician, surgeon or dentist for treatment, so should we turn only to a skilled administrator or executive for good government.

Is government by technocrats, then, the best form of government there is? Is it better than the traditional Western parliamentary democracy, or the Soviet-Chinese dictatorship of the proletariat? The great drawback of Western parliamentary democracy is that it requires a high degree of political experience and sophistication in order to succeed. It functions best where there exists a reasonably good balance between the social classes or where the separation between classes is blurred by the practice of upward social mobility. As for the Soviet-Chinese dictatorship of the proletariat, it is quite clear that what governs the Soviet Union or China is not the working class—that is, the workers and the peasants—but the massive party

bureaucracy, the party workers and the trained cadres, thoroughly indoctrinated by the party and absolutely loyal to the party machine.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is thus meritocracy of a very special kind; after all, one rises to power in Moscow or Peking only after passing through a stringent kind of monastic training or a rigorous process of elimination. The Communist bureaucracy differs from a real meritocracy only in the sense that while competence is the only yardstick in a meritocracy, in the Communist bureaucracy the main requirement would be mastery of the art of survival. Such mastery, however, is not necessarily synonymous with the kind of competence expected in a meritocracy. Lenin's famous slogan, "All power to the soviets!" merely underscores the fact that the *power* of the people is not identical with the *authority* of the few at the top who possess real competence and control the levers of government.

A related dilemma is the dilemma of technocracy and/or politics, best exemplified by the statement we often hear that we now have an efficient and effective government because it is run by technocrats. But technocrats, by definition, are men of competence who are responsible to no one, and when you abstract the element of responsibility from the operations of government, you get a machine without a soul. The technocrat has technical expertise, he knows how to get things done, and done quickly according to the rules of cost-efficiency, and so on; but he is not qualified to determine what are the things that need to be done according to an order of priority based on demonstrated human needs. Only the people themselves have the right and the means to indicate the priorities of their existence. The technocrat with his slide-rule and his electronic computers cannot supersede the people in this domain. This is a job with large human dimensions, and only those who are armed with the appropriate traditions of service, loyalty and love for the people can provide the necessary guidance and initiative. Technocrats, therefore, are fine, on condition that they work under the direction of others who are clothed with political responsibility.

This brings us to the dilemma of liberty and/or equality. The classic statement in this domain is the famous slogan of the French Revolution: liberté, egalité, fraternité. We may lay aside fraternity in this context as a secular expression of the ancient ethical/religious ideal of human brotherhood; it is the facile and familiar equation of liberty with equality that has created much confusion in the annals of political philosophy.

Since men are not biologically equal, it becomes an obligation of good government to see to it that this biological inequality does not

result in gross forms of political, economic and social inequality. The ideal condition would, in fact, be the classical socialist principle: from each according to his ability, to each according to his need. But it is obvious that the more a society approximates a condition of equality among its members, the more it is obliged to restrict the liberties of all. Thus, it is not strange that in our time the most equal societies are usually the least free, while the freest societies are often the most unequal.

Liberty is essentially an individualist aspiration; it is a man's cry of defiance against another man who would enslave him, as well as against a society that would subjugate him. On the other hand, the thrust towards equality is usually also a thrust towards collectivism, the theory being that a man has no existence apart from the society to which he belongs; therefore, the society is all, and the individual is nothing. But a man is born alone, and a man dies alone, and the best moments and finest achievements of a lifetime often come to a man, in solitude. It may be true that the quality of being human shines best in a man living and working with his fellows; what is certain is that a man can find true fulfillment only within himself as he listens to the resonance of his own soul.

III

The case for individual liberty was most forcefully stated by John Stuart Mill in what he called the "very simple principle"

> ...that the sole and end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightly exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others...The only part of the conduct of anyone, for which he is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.

This is the principle upon which has been built the modern structure of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Those rights and freedoms are now embodied in the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights and codified in the twin Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic and Social Rights—two epoch-making documents which have been ratified by most countries of the world, including the Philippines.

Most modern national constitutions, in setting forth the rights and freedoms of the citizen, do not quite go as far as Mill's *Essay on*

Liberty; they set forth in explicit terms certain limitations on individual rights. These limitations are normally those required by public safety and morals, and by the security of the State. Limitations of this nature had much earlier been recognized as necessary by John Locke in his *Second Treatise of Government:*

Freedom then is not what Sir Roberty Filmer tells us, "a liberty for everyone to do what he lists, to live as he pleases, and not to be tied by any laws." But freedom of men under government is to have a standing rule to live by, common to everyone of that society, and made by the legislative power of that society; a liberty to follow my own will in all things, where that rule prescribes not; and not to be subject to the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, arbitrary will of another man: as freedom of nature is to be under no other restraint but the law of nature.

Rousseau accepted Locke's doctrine of freedom as emanating from the law of nature. In *The Social Contract* he declares that it would be "unreasonable to suppose that men threw themselves irretrievably and unconditionally into the arms of an absolute master, and that the first expedient which proud and unsubdued men hit upon for their common security was to run headlong into slavery." He derides politicians who "attribute to man a natural propensity to servitude, because the slaves within their observation are seen to bear the yoke with patience; they fail to reflect that it is with liberty as with innocence and virtue; the value is known only to those who possess them, and the taste for them is forfeited when they are forfeited themselves." He concludes:

We cannot, therefore, from the servility of nations already enslaved, judge of the natural disposition of mankind for or against slavery; we should go by the prodigious efforts of every free people to save itself from oppression.... I feel that it is not for slaves to argue about liberty.

The most basic of all the individual freedoms is freedom of opinion-freedom of speech and of the press, and freedom of dissent. The most eloquent formulation of this freedom is, again, that of John Stuart Mill:

If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.... But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race: posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, if right, are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth; if wrong, they lose, what is al-

most as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.

In his 1966 commencement speech at the University of the Philippines to which we have previously referred, President Marcos had some pertinent observations to make about the right of dissent. Describing student dissent, when it is not inspired by extraneous motivations, as "the purest form of political dissent," he expressed certain reservations about the right of dissent in these words:

> It is truly a paradox that often, even in democracies, the majority is not held in the highest esteem. But the truth of the matter is that the right to agree with official policy is fully as fundamental, and equally entitled to respect and protection, as the right to dissent.
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> In a free decision, there is no special distinction that attaches to dissent itself that is not equally attachable to agreeement. Nevertheless, there is a difference. The sure test of the strength of the right of free expression is the existence of dissent. For although government action is surer with unanimous citizen agreement, we can never prove the existence of free expression except by our respect for the unorthodox. And free expression in modern politics is perhaps the crucial element of liberty itself. It cannot be different for student dissent in a free university. In societies that aim to educate their youth for a life in freedom, the educational process must not be an education in arbitrariness and restraint.

It is of course true that a certain degree of conformity, a consensual respect for majority opinion within a society, is a necessary condition for the existence of that society. But a society that cannot guarantee a sufficient degree of individuality, differentiation, and diversity among its members, condemns itself to a state of mediocrity, stagnation and death.

The idea held by Locke and Rousseau that man is "free by Nature" was vigorously contested by Hegel who called the "assumption...one of those nebulous images which theory produces; an idea which it cannot avoid originating, but which it fathers upon real existence, without sufficient historical justification." Hegel continued:

> Freedom...does not exist as original and natural. Rather must it be first sought out and won; and that by an incalculable medial discipline of the intellectual and moral powers. The state of Nature is...predominantly that of injustice and violence, of untamed natural impulses, of inhuman deeds and feelings. Limitation is certainly produced by Society and the State, but it is a limitation of the more brute emotions and rude instincts...This kind of constraint is part of the instrumentality by which only the consciousness

of Freedom and the desire for its attainment in its true form can be obtained...We should look upon such limitation as the indispensable proviso of emancipation. Society and the State are the very conditions in which freedom is realized.

Central to the philosophy of liberty of John Locke was the concept of private property. This led, in turn, to the theory that man has virtually unlimited freedom to pursue his self-interest. The ends of justice and equality are achieved, in the ultimate analysis, through the interacting relationship among all the members of the society as each of them pursues his own self-interest. This is the whole basis of the doctrine of *laissez-faire,* the theme of *The Wealth of Nations,* Adam Smith's monumental contribution to the study of the burgeoning capitalist society of England during the eighteenth century. With almost cynical realism, he remarked that:

It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinners but from their regard to their self-interest. We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our necessities, but of their advantage.

In short, the forces of the "free market" operating in accordance with the laws of supply and demand, as well as with the rules of free competition, and catering solely to the profit-motive, would suffice to spark and propel the engine of economic development. The theory, however, did not quite work out that way in actual practice, and the Industrial Revolution based on the "free market" spawned an economic system characterized by gross conditions of social inequality and injustice resulting from the ruthless exploitation of the working class.

Karl Marx, who lived as a young man in that period of brutal exploitation, established the philosophical basis for a theory of Socialism that was to throw the whole world into the vortex of permanent revolution. More than a mere protest movement against the excesses of the capitalist system of the day, Marxian Socialism sought to base itself on a rigours "scientific" method, which, while accepting the assumptions of capitalism, regarded the latter merely as a necessary stage in the inevitable triumph of Socialism. This scientific method is the basis for the Marxian hypothesis of historical materialism. Drawing generously from the premises of Hegelian dialectics, Marx formulated the hypothesis in these words:

The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and intellectual processes of life. It is not the cons-

ciousness of men which determines their existence; it is on the contrary their social existence which determines their consciousness.

The logical corollaries of historical materialism as propounded by Marx were the theory of "surplus value" and the doctrine of the "class struggle." The first exposed the mechanism by which the workers are exploited by the owners of the means of production; the second demonstrated the inevitability of revolution, since the goals of the class struggle could not be achieved by political means alone. Marx considered liberalism and democracy, based on the theories of John Locke and Adam Smith, as nothing but a cover for the "dictatorship of the bourgeoisie," in lieu of which he then proposed the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

Marxian Socialism survives, in our day, in the two principal varieties, Social Democracy and Communism, which differ from each other mainly as regards the Marxian doctrines which they choose to emphasize. Indeed, the proliferation of Marxist movements and Marxist parties throughout the world is proof of the great seminal value of the thought of Karl Marx. It is a phenomenon comparable only to the proliferation of Christian dogma and practice that has resulted in a multiplicity of sects, all claiming descent from the Master Himself.

All great revolution of thought and action go through stages of growth and development corresponding roughly to the stages of human life: birth, childhood, adolescence, maturity, old age, death or transmutation. They are bound to undergo a process of constant modification as their doctrines are put to the test of experience and reality, and as they encounter other revolutionary ideas or events to which they must adjust by absorption, accommodation, or coalescence. Thus, after two hundred years, American freedom and democracy today bear only a remote family resemblance to those which animated the Founding Fathers in 1776. The scope of individual freedom has been steadily eroded in spite of the heroic rearguard action of the U.S. Supreme Court; and to repeat today, without qualification, the famous Jeffersonian maxim, "That government is best which governs least," is to recite a beautiful myth out of a dead or dying age.

Similarly, the theory and practice of Socialism in the first socialist State of the world — the Soviet Union — have been radically modified in only a period of barely sixty years. Although Soviet apologists would never admit it in public, they know that Soviet Socialism today is not what was propounded by Marx and Engels and ela-

borated by Lenin. However, when Chairman Mao accuses the Soviet leaders of "revisionism," implying that the People's Republic of China is the only true inheritor of Marxian Socialism, he glosses over the fact, which is obvious to any objective observer, that Chinese Socialism itself is as much Chinese as it is Socialist. What is more, the leaders of the two great Socialist States would not be able to explain how, when, or if they expect to implement the celebrated Marxian dogma of the eventual "withering away of the State" under Communism. The answer, of course, is that they can no more implement this dogma today than President Ford can implement the Jeffersonian maxim already referred to. And they can no more hope to achieve the ideals implied in these poetic principles than the Pope can ever expect to see realized on earth that equally poetic teaching of Jesus: "Love thy neighbor as thyself." Such maxims and dogmas are not necessarily false because unattainable; they partake of the essence of truth, but only in the sense that they serve as perpetual invitations or goads to ultimate perfection.

The doctrine of untrammelled liberty based on the principle that "man is free by nature" can no more be sustained today than the opposite dogma that man is the slavish, unquestioning pawn in the hands of the State. Similarly, neither the laissez-faire economy nor the totally planned economy can be sustained today in the face of the obvious advantages and the demonstrated viability of the mixed economy. Such an economy would be based on a program of essential incentives to national development within the context of an economic plan of sufficient flexibility so that it can adjust to necessary changes in scope and direction.

One thing should be made clear. As the slave civilizations of the past—and their contemporary analogues—have shown, development can be achieved without freedom or with only a modicum of freedom. But the production of enough food, clothing and shelter for the people, and the building of roads, bridges, skyscraper complexes, and temples of art and culture, are only half—and the less important half—of the story of development; the other half—the more important half—has to do with the building of a better man, the improvement of the interior human being. And you cannot make a better human being without freedom, for the simple reason that freedom is of the very essence of being human.

It is a great and good thing to produce enough food, houses and roads for our people, but it is infinitely better that these be produced by the labor of men who are free.

I repeat: a nation can develop without freedom. But development is like embarking on an important voyage: half the value, half the fun, of it is in getting there, in the very process of reaching your destination.

It has been said that the economies and the politics of the United States and the Soviet Union are slowly converging. Though the report may be somewhat exaggerated — mainly by Peking — it is probably basically true. This is because two superpowers vying for world supremacy can hardly avoid finding out what makes the other so successful; for both of them a decent respect for the opposition is the beginning of wisdom. In other words, it is part of the penalty of their being on top that, almost without realizing it, they inevitably begin to resemble each other.

As with the great Superpowers, so also, *mutatis mutandis,* with all other States, including the Philippines. The withering away of absolute dogma is inevitable, given the accelerated mobility of people and the expanding scope and speed of communication. The more intimate interaction and interpenetration of cultures will hasten this process. The consequent moderation of the fanaticism of the Right and the Left will give new opportunity and scope for Liberalism as a philosophy and a way of life. Professor Harry K. Girvetz, of the University of California, has explained why Liberalism could serve as the proper guide for a nation as it devises its own scheme for development and survival.

> The context of liberalism varies with varying conditions — liberals may one day challenge and another day cherish the church; in one age they may seek less government intervention in economic affairs, in another age more; they have been hospitable to the interests and ambitions of the business community, under changed circumstances they may be hostile; for decades they have preached the virtues of labor unions, they may one day consider their vices. But in every case the inspiration is the same: a hostility to concentrations of power that threaten the freedom of the individual and prevent him from realizing his potentialities; a willingness to re-examine and recontruct social institutions in the light of new needs.

Liberalism denies the existence of eternal verities; it believes that the only thing about truth that is eternal is that truth is never completely revealed or arrived at. It can only be approximated.

Let me conclude by setting forth here as I did in another context nearly two years ago, what I conceive to be the liberal view of the present state of affairs in our country. I believe that there is urgent and imperative need to establish the national society on a basis of

freedom with responsibility and liberty with discipline, order without regimentation and authority without tyranny; that is, a compromise between the integrity of individual life and the imperatives of collective existence.

These principles are widely understood and, I think, generally accepted. What remains to be done is to bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality.