

DISCUSSION

Discussants: Ms. Aida J. Capucion,
Province of Leyte

Ms. Diwata Reyes,
The Philippine Collegian

Moderator: Ms. Resurreccion C. Sydiongco,
Ministry of Education and Culture

Mrs. Aida J. Capucion: "Eastern Visayas' per capita income of P825 in 1975 was approximately one-fifth that of the Metro Manila area. In comparison with the other regions of the country, the Eastern Visayas was and probably still is the third most depressed region of the country." I am reacting to these words "depressed region" because in the last portion of his paper, Mr. Torres identified the vast resources of Region VIII—that we are rich not only in natural resources but also in human resources. Could we not just keep "depressed region" out and be more emphatic about it and consider Region VIII as a growth potential? And as to the participating concept of development, the people of Region VIII should be infused with a sense of appreciation, commitment, and involvement. In all development efforts, we should tap our human and natural resources. Since we are also an agricultural region, we should push and maximize our efforts in the development of our agricultural lands. Perhaps, we will be able to correct the impression of Region VIII as very, very poor.

Let it be the challenge to Region VIII that we are not really depressed; that we are, in fact, working towards tapping all our resources so that we will be self-sufficient and self-reliant in all aspects and challenges of development. For one, we want to be able to establish equitable distribution of wealth and income in the region. Second, we want to be able to provide opportunities for employment. And third, we want to be able to decrease population growth in Tacloban and Region VIII which can result in poverty.

Poverty is a cause-effect relationship. It is the result of all these three: namely, inequitable distribution of income, lack of employment opportunities in Region VIII—which is why there is the outmigration to the Metropolitan areas of the Philippines—and third, the rapid increase of population. I hope that we can tackle these subjects during the discussions. The problems have been identified. I hope we can devise possible solutions.

The cultural orientation, the value system, the behavioral aspect of Region VIII which can also result in corruption, nepotism, and lack of achievement motivation, are weaknesses that can also dislocate economy. I'm sad that the failures in our efforts for development have been pointed out as due to the cultural orientation of Region VIII. This might be a

cultural lag on our part. But we cannot cope with the changes—technological and scientific changes—that are occurring here, if we cannot internalize our values. Can't we internalize and make use of our *hiya*, *pakikisama* and other familiar sentiments? These can be very strong instruments in promoting the development programs in Region VIII. Let them not be causes of failure. Let them be challenges to us, that all these deep-rooted values can be instruments in development. We cannot turn our backs on our roots. We have to maximize our efforts so that some of the values that are really constraints to development like *ningas cogon* can be minimized. Again, we cannot turn our backs on our deep-rooted values. We have to internalize them in the development process. That's why the President himself is very successful in his promulgation of national policies because he has identified the psychological, the cultural orientation of his people—internalizing them in his national policies. He respects us—our personality as Filipinos. He internalized it in his policies to the point where we accept whatever he has introduced in the Philippines.

Page one of Mr. Torres' paper also states, "The social classes who bear the brunt of continued poverty inevitably resort to violent means." Let us not be more negative in our approach in trying to fight poverty. Couldn't it be just considered as a challenge? And what means are we going to take? Let it be the democratic means and let us skip from our vocabulary the word "violence" because we don't want to implant it in our minds that there is no solution to the problem except violence. And that is what the President is maximizing in his effort: that there must be a democratic revolution terms of solving the immediate problems of the country through democratic means.

Thank you.

Mrs. Diwata Reyes: I am reacting to the paper as a whole. There are no various concerns and issues. There is only one concern and one issue, that is, scientific investigation of our concern and how to confront underdevelopment as the only issue. Let me elaborate.

There is only one process of development, if it will be real development, a process based on the scientific investigation of the whole social structure and the social practices. Why line up these theories of several writers and select which one is believed as best? Investigation of the social condition must come first before conception. This conception must be based on complete analysis of concrete conditions. The main concern is to have a particular investigation of development in the context of general experience. To be specific, let me quote from the paper presented.

Page 7, paragraph 5: "In terms of resources, the region is not poor. Fish abound in surrounding seas. There is abundant rainfall. Mineral resource are plenty." This also reflects the condition in the national scale. We have the necessary resources yet the country is underdeveloped. I would like to point out what Mr. Torres himself presented, that "development is the

concern of the entire society. We cannot develop one aspect or one sub-system of the society. These systems are interrelated."

Going back to the paper again, on page 7: "What then is wrong with the region? Or is there anything wrong with the region in the first place? Is there a problem here of development?" Then why do hundreds of development plans fail as what the speaker said a while ago? And why the inequitable distribution of income and of wealth which my co-discussant mentioned? From these, I think the interest for scientific investigation can come in.

Mrs. Resurrection C. Sydiongco: I think you have heard the reactions of the two discussants. The main issue now is whether to accept the thesis that Eastern Visayas is a "depressed region". And that the next thing to do is to be able to pinpoint or identify the variables that cause the nation to be disadvantaged, depressed, or underserved. Now, before Mr. Torres will present his own views, we would like to invite the audience to pursue their reactions to the main issue.

Mr. Seggio Pumar (Leyte Colleges): My question is, is it possible that development can be accomplished at all without underdevelopment in any levels? And, if development is attained, is it possible that it will completely eradicate underdevelopment?

Also, is it not a natural law of life that we must live in a situation of opposites? That if there is development, there is underdevelopment? If there is positive, there is negative? Just as there is God, there is the devil? The good and the bad?

Reyes: On the questions of the gentleman, I would like to react with these statements. Well, if there is underdevelopment, the question whether we can combat it or not depends on us. If we would like to live in a society where inequality prevails, then it's up to us. But then, if you would also like to conceive development as the development of the majority of the Filipino people, then that's another question.

Prof. Cesario Torres: I am very thankful for the very profound comments of my two discussants: Mrs. Capucion and Diwata Reyes. Despite the fact that Mrs. Capucion is not, in fact, that young and Diwata is not exactly that old, the two ladies have one thing in common: there is no generation gap between the two of them.

Now, I agree that I might have unwittingly emphasized the more negative aspect of Eastern Visayas and the Philippines. But my position is this: if we will ever feel contentment, we might believe that we are really in heaven. But, perhaps you will agree with me that insofar as the general situation in the region is concerned, I believe that we have not been able to provide that political, social, and economic framework by which the Waray can fulfill himself. I don't think that it is necessary to provide you again with statistical data on food, clothing, shelter, water, electricity (Mrs. Sydiongco), transportation. I think that even the food that you will eat now is a sign of a little bit of poverty, because it is not fantastic compared to what are being served nightly at the Intercontinental.

In reaction to the gentleman from Leyte Colleges, what I am saying is this: development is a process from one level to another more desirable level, of society. I did not postulate nor did I ever say that development is the final end of man, because you know very well that man was made for heaven and nothing short of that will satisfy him. I think this is a historical process for as long as man is man.

Thank you.

Shirley Advincula (Ateneo de Manila University): I hope that whatever I'm going to say or ask here will not offend the audience. I was born here and was raised here up to the age of ten. The family moved away and now is my first time to be here after eight years. I was listening to the discussant and Mr. Torres and I was wondering what the paper is all about.

I think the important thing here is to recognize first of all that this region is one of the more depressed regions of the country today. I don't think anyone should apologize for that. The fact is, relative to the other or compared to the others, this region is lagging far behind, economically. The point as Mr. Torres said is that the region has all the natural resources and I can see that.

Talking of another item, Mr. Torres says: "The population has decreased." I wonder whether he decried it, or it is to be bewailed or to be lauded because all over the country today, I think that the policy of the government is to control population growth. Now I wonder what you mean by that, Mr. Torres, whether you decried it or not? Would you rather that the population of Leyte or the adjacent provinces increase? Because you said "only," which I thought was very, very significant.

Now I would like to raise this question. I'm very much concerned and very much interested as to what's been happening here. In fact, I was talking to my cousin earlier while we were going around looking at some of the scenes of my childhood here, I said, "How come Tacloban or Leyte has not really progressed as rapidly as it should, considering the fact that its resources are quite enormous?" So, what really are the problems? You have the First Lady, you have Governor Romualdez, here, and I think that these are plus factors as far as improving the situation is concerned. You have also the resources and you have, I think, the population. But I don't know what's wrong with the population, why it is not responding to the requirements of development.

I know that we are unfortunately visited constantly by typhoons. So, everytime there is some improvement, there is a terrific setback everytime the typhoon comes around. But, is this the only problem? Or is it not the only problem but the biggest problem which constitutes the setback? What can you do? what are the other problems?

The other discussants here said that we must first identify the main problem, or recognize the problems. We must next fight them instead of apologizing for them by saying that: "We are not even like that, we're not really like this" because I don't think we can progress that way. I don't know what's really wrong.

Gov. Teofilo Sabonsolin (Subprovince of Biliran): I think I agree with the paper of Prof. Torres in connection with the rich resources that we have in Region VIII. I come from the subprovince of Biliran and I can tell you that we are rich—rich in rice, rich in fish. Yet, in spite of the fact we are rich in rice and fish, we don't have energy. We don't have power. There's always darkness in the subprovince of Biliran. That's why the population there has increased tremendously. And that is one of the important stumbling blocks towards making the region not a depressed area.

We have also other mineral resources in the subprovince of Biliran. But there's no port in the subprovince that will enable ships to transport these to the rich market in the Philippines which is Manila.

The subprovince is small but in terms of rice production, compared to other provinces of Samar—Eastern Samar, Northern Samar—treated separately, we produce more rice than any of the three provinces. Why? It is again technology—the sense of technology. That's one of the reasons why we cannot raise plenty of rice in Eastern Samar and Northern Samar, in spite of the fact that there's plenty of vacant lots there. Why? Because our people there are getting ignorant of either fishing or farming. And, yes, it's true in Catarman. I was informed, and the Director of Plant Industry can bear me out, that in the northern province of Samar, in spite of the fact that there's a big plain there and an adequate supply of water, they have no irrigation system. Most of the ricefields there are rainfed. So the problem of the local government is to develop more irrigation systems in order to produce more rice. Another reason why we can't be considered as a depressed area in the subprovince of Biliran of which the capital town is Naval (110 kms. from Tacloban) is that we have several vehicles going already to Naval, around six or ten of them, after the completion of the bridge there. However, the road from Lemon to the subprovince is so difficult that anybody who has been used to the kind of road from Tacloban to Abuyog would not like to pass again that kind of bridge from Lemon to Naval. But why is this so? I think, in terms of priorities, the national government has not provided more funds for the construction of better roads in all parts of Region VIII.

Therefore, as mentioned by Mayor Cinco here of Tacloban City, plans have already been initiated by the different local governments here in Region VIII.

Biliran defeated Tacloban alone this year for it has already a plan for two years, another for five years. There's also another plan for the Year 2000.

In other words, we already know the deficiencies of our region and its political society. What's important here is to get funds.

If ever the President and the First Lady will provide us with the necessary funds for all the projects that are really necessary for the improvement of the standard of living of our people, I know it will not be very far when we would be really developed.

For your information, the subprovince of Biliran has already received an amount of ₱2 million for the improvement of our roads from Lemon to the

bridge and also another ₱2 million for a circumferential road throughout the subprovince of Biliran.

Again, I want to say that what is important is funding. If we have plenty of money, even the high school graduates will undertake a project, not even needing an engineer to finish all that is needed to improve the quality of life of our people.

Torres: There are two gentlemen who are raising their hands. Prof. Magno, you are a guest from Manila. I don't think you should participate. And Director Llames, you will have your time. Don't worry. The conference participants will roast you, the way they are doing now to me.

Mr. Mariano Ruiz (National Police Commission): I hail from the province of the President and am now stranded in the province of the First Lady. Well, Prof. Torres has pushed a problem before us: Is there a problem here of development? It so happens that I have been all over the Philippines and it is very obvious that the Eastern Visayas is really one of the underdeveloped regions of our country. It's very obvious.

What are we going to develop for? This is another problem. What are we going to develop is still another problem. Are we going to develop economically, culturally, socially or, perhaps, simultaneously? However, there's a problem before we have to develop. . . and that is peace and order.

Peace and order is a precondition for any endeavor, be it economic development or social development or what not. That is the first problem that we have to face: peace and order.

Again, I have been observing that we are striving for industrialization in this region. But, mind you, there are only a few countries which were able to develop without passing through the agricultural stage. We have to develop agriculturally first before we can speak of industrialization.

Mr. Angel de Veyra (Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Leyte): Just like any well-meaning member or participant of the group, I have been tickled, or rather my mind or imagination was tickled, by the question in this paper of Mr. Torres which says: "What's wrong with this region?" It is a very difficult question, indeed. I was likewise tickled with his beautiful praise that was taken from President Marcos in one of his speeches: "Of what good is democracy if it's not for the poor?" Also, I'd like also to react to what Mrs. Capucion said that one of the objectives of rural development is equitable distribution of wealth. Let us reduce these things into specifics.

For instance, "Of what good is democracy if it is not for the poor?" Corollarily, I would also like to ask this question: "Of what good is a progressive Philippines, of what good are our concrete bridges and our beautiful Marcos bridge, if the average Filipino remains to be the carrier of water and hewer of wood of a Chinaman?" I would like to cite a very specific example. Let us take the case of Tacloban City. I would like to ask you who are the millionaires in the City of Tacloban? Who are the businessmen who control our very important essential commodities ranging

from copra down to sugar? I think we can't point to a certain Filipino businessman who has complete control of these essential commodities.

I don't really believe that the objective of rural development for the equitable distribution of wealth is, at this point, achievable because, taking the example here in the City of Tacloban, I foresee that a day will come when all of us will be strangled by aliens. I have kept on thinking about this problem and I have thinking what the citizens or we in the government service should do insofar as this problem is concerned.

Now the government has launched a cooperative development program which, sad to say, until now has not really been successful, although there have been a few handful of cooperatives that have probably been very successful. And I would say that, at this point, this problem must be tackled. At present, the resources for a cooperative come from the private sector because under our present development cooperative program, the resources of our people are being pooled together to put up the initial capital. The idea is to put up some kind of business to compete with the Chinamen's or if not to compete, to provide essential commodities for our people. At this stage, however, I doubt if we can do that, because I am very sure that here in Tacloban alone, any well-off Chinaman would willingly work against or spend ₱50,000 just to destroy or kill another businessman. Thus, I believe that the government should come in to save us from this kind of future debacle.

Probably, the government could come in by way of providing an amount, say for instance, ₱1 million, to start a cooperative business. Then, anybody who buys from this coop store automatically becomes its member. In this way, there is enough motivation; there is enough incentive on the buyers' part to really patronize our own business establishment.

I think this is only one way of disciplining our people to band together so that an average Filipino would not remain as the carrier of water of the Chinaman or of another alien. I now throw the question to everyone, "What can everybody do to save the situation?"

I assure you that here in Leyte, we're producing enough rice. We have so much copra here. But who are the people profiting from these businesses? I don't think that the Filipinos are profiting out of these businesses. Our construction materials, our spare parts for automobiles, and other commodities are being controlled by non-Filipinos. I think that we have to band together to save our people at present, and our children in the generations yet to come.