

The Sociologist in a Developing Society

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In his recent work entitled *Asian Drama*, Gunnar Myrdal complains of an apparent lack of interest among behavioral scientists in the problems of economic development. The complaint is phrased in the following terms.¹

One might have expected the behavioral disciplines, particularly social anthropology and sociology, to provide the more broadly based system of theories and concepts needed for the scientific study of the problem of development. Unfortunately, they have not done so. The tradition of social anthropology has been to work in static terms, attempting to explain the structure and internal relations of societies in what we now call a state of stagnation or "low-level equilibrium." Much sociological research has remained within this tradition. It is, for instance, surprising how little attention has been devoted in village surveys to the effects of population increase on social stratification. And when studies in these disciplines are focused on change, as they increasingly are, the emphasis is not often placed on development, much less on framing a more comprehensive system of theories and concepts suited to the needs of the planner.

Whether or not Myrdal is correct in his assessment of our disciplines, those who have planned and organized this convention are to be congratulated on their choice of "Social Theory and Development" as a most significant and timely theme. And I should like to recall here that the theme in fact represents a return to the origin of our disciplines—a return to the problems which preoccupied such men as Comte, Durkheim and Tonnies. All three of them were concerned with the processes of development; they thought in terms of whole societies with all of their interrelated institutions, much as Myrdal himself does.² And all three were concerned, as sociologists of development are today,³ not only with increasing income, but with problems of unity and integration in developing societies.

It is on this last point, the integration of society, that I should like to focus today; for it seems to be an area of the highest practical as well as theoretical importance, and this not only in the developing nations but in those which are called developed. August Comte lived through the turmoil which followed the

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¹ (New York: Pantheon, 1968), Vol. I, pp. 27-28

² Pp. 26-31, "A Plea for an Institutional Emphasis."

³ See, for Example, S.N. Eisenstadt, *Modernization: Protest and Change* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966).

French Revolution, and was producing his major work during the troubles of 1848; he knew that order in society does not come about easily or automatically as some sociologists of the functionalist persuasion seem to imagine, and he devoted his life to laying the foundations for what he thought would be a well-ordered society. Durkheim and Tönnies had much the same purpose in their work. And now France is again in turmoil, thousands of the Negro poor are encamped in Washington, Columbia University is under siege, there are signs of deep-seated political disaffection in Britain and Italy. John Kenneth Gailbraith suggests that this springtime will go down in history as the most contentious since 1848. Even American Catholic priests have formed a national organization which seems to have the hierarchy worried, and one of the priests is quoted as remarking that "Power is the name of the game."⁴ "The natives are restless," it seems, not in HongKong and Djakarta where we have learned to expect it, but in New York and Washington and Paris and Rome.

The roots of this restlessness and alienation are not the same everywhere. But in the more serious cases, the French workingman and the American Negro for example, the source of the trouble seems to have been a rigid social structure which over long periods of time excluded significant groups from full participation in the economic and social progress enjoyed by the rest of the community. The French worker remembers the massacres of workers by troops in 1830 and 1848, the smashing of the Parish Commune of 1871, Petain's suppression of freedom of organization and de Gaulle's cavalier treatment of the unions in the interests of a stable economy and the "glory" of France; the

worker feels that by his sweat he has paid the price of economic development as by his blood he has paid for political progress, but in both cases the benefits have been enjoyed by others. So de Gaulle's action in calling on the troops once again will not surprise the worker, but will increase his bitterness and sense of alienation. Likewise the American Negro remembers a century of segregation in the south and of ghetto life in the north—a century since emancipation but without real participation in the nation's progress.

Hence it seems important for the sociologist, particularly in time of change and development, to look beyond a simple organic model of society and not view it as necessarily a well-ordered machine structured by norms and values and mutually-accepted role obligations that creates in its members only those needs and desires which it is in a position to fulfill. Fr. Quetchenbach in his paper prepared for this convention has called attention to the possibly conflicting needs and demands of an organization and of the individuals who make it up. Similarly a national society in the process of development may create in many of its members and groups new needs and desires which it cannot or at least does not satisfy, with resulting frustration and alienation. It would be wise for the sociologist, therefore, to keep in his conceptual tool-kit a model of society as in fact composed of a congeries of competing groups, structured largely by power, each group seeking to realize its own interests even at the expense of others.

In the practical order, the sociologist, particularly in time of change and development, would do well to note possible points of cleavage in society, groups which appear to be by-passed by progress and

⁴ *Time Magazine*, May 31, 1968.

alienated from the rest of the community. Nor should he assume too readily that the absence of overt conflict means that all is well. Robin Williams makes this point.⁵

It seems essential to distinguish between the *factual* cohesion of a social aggregate, on the one hand, and the *societal integration* that occurs through shared values and beliefs. Factual cohesion refers merely to a human aggregate whose members interact without a disabling degree of overt conflict, regardless of the conditions upon which this state of affairs may depend. There is apparently a rather wide range within which an important degree of cohesion, in the sense of co-ordinated activity, can be maintained by coercion, by the effective threat of the few over the many.

I do not pretend here to be any Moses coming down from the mountain with a new revelation; much of what I propose is already being done by social scientists here in the Philippines, as the papers read at this convention testify. Dr. Liu has said something of the struggle for survival of lower-class families in Cebu, and Vice-Mayor Osmeña has not only analyzed the squatter problem but outlined a plan for doing something about it. Dr. Hubert Reynolds' paper on overseas Chinese students points the way toward a possible *rapprochement* in another area of cleavage and tension. The papers on other cultural minorities are reminders of and eloquent pleas for concern with groups which have been bypassed by progress, often exploited by the Christian majority, and which remain strangers and alien to Philippine society as a whole. Among earlier studies along this line one thinks of the work of Dr. Pal and Dr. Guthrie on the level of expectations

among various groups of our people, the study of Guerrero and Castillo on alienation among students with farm backgrounds, Sturdevant's studies of protest movements, and various studies of income, housing, and levels of living.

"All this we have done from our youth; what more is lacking to us?" may be your response to what I have said thus far. In answer I would make three suggestions. First, that we intensify our efforts at locating and documenting points of cleavage in our society, the possible alienation of disadvantaged groups which are not sharing equitably in the nation's progress. Secondly, I would suggest that we devote more attention to research on *integrating mechanisms* and institutions, by which these groups can be brought to share more fully in the nation's economic and political life—before alienation hardens into rigid class or racial antagonisms such as one finds in France, among American Negroes, and throughout much of Latin America. I see land reform, for example, as one such mechanism of integration; and I think that far more research should be done on all of its aspects. Education is an integrating institution, as Prof. Oracion has pointed out with reference to the cultural minorities. Collective bargaining between management and labor I see as an integrating institution; and in a cursory study of statistics on strike activity I have found evidence suggesting that year by year the workman and the employer are learning to solve more of their problems at the bargaining table and fewer of them in the lawcourt.⁶ Development programs such as the one

⁶ The number of strikes has been increasing generally over time, but the average man-days lost per striker decreased from 35 in 1956 to 12 in 1966, the number of contracts has increased while that of labor cases in the courts has dropped remarkably.

⁵ *American Society* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1960), p. 544.

outlined in this conference by Fr. Madigan, the Panamin project described by Prof. Oracion and the Silliman University Negrito Action Project, housing and squatter relocation projects and development projects of all kinds deserve the attention of our best research minds and resources.

And finally I would suggest that Philippine sociologists as responsible members of this society, make more of an effort to bring their findings and their policy recommendations before the public, before

lawmakers and policymakers at all levels. Those for example who would curtail the right of collective bargaining, who would ignore the rights of minority groups, who care nothing for the Filipino farmer, who would allow the development of an hereditary proletariat in slums and squatter colonies, should be made aware of the consequences of their actions. Possibly they will not change, but if the sociologist does his part it will not be said of our policymakers "Forgive them, they know not what they do."