

Freedom and National Development: Discussion

DEAN JOSE ALMONTE: We have heard a very inspiring paper from Dr. Lopez. I recall that a few years ago the President made one of his major speeches in Camp Aguinaldo, and in the course of his speech he did reveal the important officers of the government whom he consulted in the declaration of martial law. I realize now that Dr. Lopez here, in articulating the invitation to martial law, also is responsible for it.

I came to know about the conference topic from Dr. Agpalo and Dr. Solidum. They both told me that I was supposed to speak. Although I knew I was invited to this conference, I didn't know that they were supposed to discuss freedom and national development. Upon hearing from them, I said that apparently the problem was rather a problem of choice. I said by impulse that perhaps it was freedom at the expense of national development, or national development at the expense of freedom, or both. Now in the matter of making choices such as these, and in the matter of application of certain principles as those discussed in this paper and in other papers, I think it would be relevant for us to arrive at some sort of a clear conception of what really is the problem of the nation.

I do agree with Professor Rye that there was no freedom before September 21, 1972. There was no democracy before this date. The problem of the Philippines which I am confident many of us here are aware of is the one that we inherited from historical antecedents, something that we cannot do anything about. Now I can't recite them. One problem for instance is loyalties outside the national community. Our problem in the south is like this — a loyalty to a culture outside of a culture we are trying to develop. I think we are lucky that in spite of these problems, we still have time to discuss ideas like these and

hopefully be able to contribute in trying to find solutions to these problems.

Well, we have external and domestic problems as you know, and in the light of this, I would like to make an observation about the relation between freedom and development. There are two views about this relationship: one view is that freedom (political freedom) does not in fact exist unless there is economic freedom. Now this observation has been made because they say that an economically unfree worker is not a politically free citizen. The other view of course is the opposite. Now if I have to make a choice in the application of these, considering our problem which is that of survival, I feel that if we love our life, the choice is very simple — that we have to develop in order to secure freedom.

The question is: For instance, in terms of development, how can we mobilize the genius of our people? I think this gathering, this group, is one such forum that can provide original ideas for national development. But it cannot do so, I think, unless we acquire the courage to. Perhaps the time has come for us to really review these traditional problems.

And lastly, I think we need some sort of an intellectual liberation. I think the point is that we can't even see our own problems with our own eyes. I think that, in seeing our problems with the eyes of a Westerner, proposing a scheme of solution also devised by them, and using the principles that they have formulated with their own experience, we are doing a great injustice to our 42 million people.

DR. WILFRIDO V. VILLACORTA: Dr. Lopez's notion of individual freedom bases itself on the thinking of the philosophers of seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe, whose main concern was the emancipation of the bourgeoisie from monarchical rule. He quotes John Stuart Mill who talked about man's absolute independence and sovereignty over his own body and mind, and everything that concerns himself. Dr. Lopez said that "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." He makes this assertion even as he referred to the fact that the "free-market" system based on the Lockean concept of private property "spawned an economic system characterized by gross conditions of social inequality and injustice resulting from the ruthless exploitation of the working class."

Then Dr. Lopez proceeds to offer a centrist answer by saying that "It is a great and good thing to produce enough food, houses and roads for our people, but it is definitely better that these be produced by the labor of men who are free." He talks about a compromise between the "integrity of individual life and the imperatives of collective existence."

The paper of Dr. Lopez, I believe, ultimately concerns itself with the present political system of the Philippines, and it is in this connection that I would like to give my comments. Perhaps, the best way to evaluate the martial law regime is not to invoke obsolete concepts of libertarianism that are rooted in Western societies. To do so makes one quite vulnerable, for the apologists of the New Society could easily refer to the chaos and deprivation of pre-martial law days, which were based on such obsolete and foreign concepts.

Rather, it is better to situate the present regime in the context of a developing nation—its needs, its objectives, and the options available to it. It seems difficult to deny that, given the almost insurmountable problems of the Third World, limitations to individual freedom for the emancipation of the majority in society have become a necessity. It is also undeniable that so-called developed countries—including the United States—underwent a necessary period of authoritarianism in its earlier stage of political and social development. As a new nation seeks to liberate itself from the crippling effects of foreign dominance, social inequality, a low level of economic growth, and national disunity, it has no choice but to resort to authoritarian rule.

It is the folly of many of us political scientists to use the political criteria of liberal philosophers and liberal democracies in their present stage of political development, and to forget the pre-take-off stage of present industrialized nations of the West—most of which required central planning and limitations to political liberty. If we may quote from his paper, "Since men are not biologically equal, it becomes an obligation of a good government to see to it that this biological inequality does not result in gross forms of political, economic and social inequality." But Dr. Lopez has, at the same time, admitted that this social inequality, which is the immediate objective of every new nation, must necessarily conflict with individual freedom. To quote him again, "the most equal societies are usually the least free, while the freest societies are often the most unequal."

The dilemma in the mind of the paper reader about the pros and cons of individual liberty and social liberty are reflective of the predicament of most Filipino political scientists. Similar debates on the social issues of developing nations almost always end with the logical conclusion that what is needed is a socialistic philosophy of development. It is about time that we Filipino political scientists stop isolating ourselves from the tide of development in social analysis. The term "socialism" is fast losing its stigma even in the present dispensation. The President himself has used the term "moral socialism." This is obviously an admission of the fact that, in a developing society, policy-makers cannot escape from a socialistic ideology and program of action. We know that socialist movements — whether on the intellectual or political plane — have gained respectability even in developed societies; but like other political philosophies, socialist thought in our country must be shaped by the unique experiences of our people.

It is in this respect that the theory of liberation comes in. It is also in this context that we can judge the legitimacy and effectivity of the martial law regime — that is, its success or its shortcomings in liberating our developing society from exploitative forces from within and from without.

PROFESSOR ROMEO OCAMPO: I think the most important part of the paper is the distinction between civil and political rights and economic and social rights. I just read a book by Christian Bay where he worried about the same distinction. He said that political scientists have been preoccupied with that kind of distinction and that they have not redefined political science and politics to relate to the achievement of basic human needs. This is important because Dr. Lopez is drawing attention to this distinction. It is also important because some people have tried to persuade us about its survivability.

I quite agree that this has led us to thinking that to achieve basic human needs we must sacrifice civil and human political liberty. Now to make my argument short, I don't believe in that. I think that to get bread we need freedom and liberty, if not we don't get any bread at all. I think this is one issue which political scientists have been casual about in their theorizing and their observation. I notice that Dr. Lopez himself makes some casual remarks that I don't quite agree with — like the opposition between liberty and freedom. He said in passing that it is obvious that liberty is against democracy or equality. But I would

suppose that to have real liberty, we must have equality, and the same goes the other way around.

I also wish to point out that before martial law we had freedom to the point that it got to being anarchic, which is saying that we became lax. Some books have been cited to point out the same optimism that President Lopez himself is entertaining, but I think that from our perspective it would be a very useful exercise to examine the proposition that before we had freedom and liberty. Remarks have been made, on the other hand, that actually before martial law we did not have them. I tend to agree with that kind of a proposition. There was also the casual remark about the propensity of the Filipinos in particular to acquiesce in the conditions of unfreedom; and just to end my remark at this point, perhaps we should turn the tables around for a change. The euphemism was cited that "there are no tyrants where there are no slaves," but we should also say that there are no slaves where there are no tyrants. I think we should stop blaming the victims of a change, and also blame the perpetrators of this.