

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## Comments

Perfecto Yasay, Jr. and Augusto C. Espiritu

*Philippine Studies* vol. 19, no. 1 (1971): 105–110

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

specifics. They are concerned not so much with what is to be done as with how it is to be done.

They want to think for themselves and have work to do. Work opportunities and not handouts are what they hanker for. They are more than convinced that the self-generated internal force can bring about more enduring and more profitable results. The sparkplug required is a favorable climate of job opportunities.

As Myrdal says in his *Asian Drama*, the net impact of development and industrialization is automatically the spreading of well-being to wider and wider sectors of the population.

In the Philippine milieu, conditions and factors that stimulate and induce self-reliance among the people to enable them to reach the plateau of prosperity and peace are pressingly needed.

The church, indeed, can and should fill that need.

## COMMENTS

### PERFECTO YASAY JR.

Substantially, the report has aptly taken into consideration the broad facets of the national, regional and international situation dealing with the issue of development. It has also pictured the contradictions or antagonisms between development and underdevelopment, the dominating classes and dominated classes. Thus the report mentions the alarming gap between the developed and the developing world. The various schemes employed by the developed countries such as aid strings and other numerous buyers like customs and revenue duties, quantitative restrictions and restrictive practices against goods coming from developing countries, in short exploitation which has wreaked havoc in the lives of many in the developing world. Although parenthetically, I would like to state that others have refused to use the term developing as descriptive of the countries of the Third World, as many of these countries have been stagnated by the various socio-economic, political and cultural forces working against them, and that accordingly the term underdeveloped is more appropriate.

Development and underdevelopment are essentially linked in one process: the process of domination. The contradiction between the dominated and dominating classes is characteristic of a capitalistic method of production. Private ownership of the means of production implies that in all capitalist societies there are those who own the means of production, and those who, lacking such assets, are obliged to work for the owning classes as to sell their labor for salary. Thus the dominant classes can take possession of the work of the dominated because of the place they have in the structure of production. This division into antagonistic classes is inherent in every capitalistic society, and in every such society the juridical, political and ideological structures are reflections of the class division. The state and lower defenders of ownership and order and the ideology try to justify the existing situation and prevent the dominated classes from becoming aware of the exploitation which they are suffering. Thus imperialism which is the actual historical face of capitalism and which is represented by the booming monopolies and exploitation of capital increases the underdevelopment of poor countries.

And when the struggle for liberation takes place in an underdeveloped country, the contradictions between development and underdevelopment assume a major importance. This explains the present aggression of imperialism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in all levels—economic, political, and military—which is trying to avoid any transformations in the economic structures and powers of the dependent country. In this context, underdevelopment should not be understood to mean a moment in time or a stage which immediately precedes development; underdevelopment is the opposite of development, its counterpart. When we talk about relations of causality, development is the cause of underdevelopment. The historical development of certain capitalistic countries like Western Europe and the United States was the direct cause of underdevelopment in a vast majority of Asian, African, and Latin American countries. It is in this sense that I would like to say that it would have been a more realistic approach if the report touched on the mechanics of imperialism and the forces working against each other in a capitalistic society in order for us to unfold the realities which have contributed much to underdevelopment.

Illiteracy, feudalism, fascism, discrimination, graft and corruption, hunger, poverty, the widening gap between rich and poor are merely symptoms of a sick system. Thus our actions should be directed against this system. The report urges every developing country to actively pursue a policy that aims to achieve self-reliance. And it calls for the mobilization of all efforts and factors to achieve this goal. How? This statement is easier said than done, for rich nations that have taken advantage of the dependence of poor countries have very powerful means of subverting the progressive efforts of these poor countries when so-called national interests so require. National

interest in this context would probably mean the preservation of the capitalistic system for the benefit of the developed countries. The example of Guatemala is classic. The Guatemalan government decided to introduce land reform. It nationalized 400,000 acres of uncultivated land owned by the United Fruit Company of the United States, the largest land-owner in the country. Compensation of \$600,000 was offered, the amount at which the United Fruit had valued the land in its stocks returns. The offer was refused by the company. Backed by the United States government, United Fruit demanded \$16,000,000, almost \$5 for every man, woman, and child in Guatemala. This claim was rejected. Then there followed a *coup-de-etat*. The first official act of the puppet regime that took over was to return the land to the United Fruit Company. The same thing happened in Chile, Brazil, Vietnam, and in many others. In fact, it is rumored that this almost happened to the Carlos P. Garcia administration when the Filipino First policy was announced.

Lastly, I see that the strategy adopted by this report is reformistic. It urges the Church to view its actions in the field of development as being complementary to and being in support of national development efforts of the state. In other words, it seeks to bring about changes, subject to the laws and conditions of the dominant socio-economic and political system. The principal objection to this approach is that it disregards or denies the need for establishing a qualitative link which will allow a developing country to liberate itself from the conditioning economic system—capitalism—which causes its underdevelopment. The "reformistic" approach suggests an evolution of a society within a global conditioning system subjected to the laws of commercial exchange and economic growth which guarantee the revival of that system, and to the inevitable polarization of the developed and underdeveloped countries which is the basis of all capitalist exploitation.

I do not think that the Church's role should merely be and always complementary and in support of national development efforts of the state. In the first place, the state as in many underdeveloped countries, has, as a matter of fact, embarked on the most anti-development efforts in collaboration with developed capitalist countries. On the contrary, the Church's role must be that of an initiator; it must identify itself with protest; it must be, as the early Christians were in essence, a disturbing force. It must realize that the liberation of man which is the ultimate goal of development is won.

DR. AUGUSTO C. ESPIRITU

First of all, I think that all discussions on world cooperation have dwelt so much on aspirations. But governments seem unready to be ideal-

istic. Churches, which are supposed to be the leavening influence on government, seem to be impotent institutions. We have consequently read tons and tons of reports on the need for world cooperation, etc. but the net result has remained that not very much impact on the development of the developing nations has resulted. I have had occasion to attend some of the U.N. conferences and I have noticed in the ILO, for example, that dominant groups representing dominant countries exist. The same is true of the FAO and the UNCTAD. For all the protestations about the need for world cooperation, the UNCTAD, for example, seems to me to have become a debating club, a forum for discussions where one group masses together all the arguments for greater aid in terms of structures and preferences and the other group defends the status quo.

To my mind, all of these things can truly be meaningful only if we as Churches can really exert influence on our respective governments. First, perhaps more important than the other, the Churches of the developed countries. Of course, I know that several of our Church people have done their own bit. One outstanding example to me would be Tinbergen. Tinbergen has done much toward trying to influence not only the Dutch government but also the U.N. to do something in the way of world planning and in the way of really helping developing countries. Barbara Ward, on the other hand, representing the Pontifical Commission, has sounded out so many warnings concerning the need for Christian developed nations at this stage in our history, people echoing Christian aspirations, to be able to really look at our world in terms of one world community. But the report read in Tokyo would seem to indicate that people are not really ready to consider our world as an international community. And so we talk about these things in terms of "should we increase or should we not increase the aid to developing countries?" What kind of sacrifices are meant to be suffered by those who are doing the aid-giving? What type of benefits should be received by those in the receiving end? I think that Churches have to press a little bit more on the need for recognizing that there is one international community and that there is need for one international justice in the world community. I think that this is the biggest role that the Churches can really play. I should like to see more of these influences. For example, when the governments decided in the U.N. conferences and in the UNCTAD particularly that the developed countries would contribute 1% of their national income to developing countries, we the Churches said No: up to 3%.

Some very disturbing facts could perhaps be pointed out apropos the Philippine situation. I understand from our latest statistics that 75% of the aid given by the U.S. government to the Philippines, has been used for the expenses of American personnel, the technicians and experts. I think that if the Churches knew this, they should be moved

to do something about it. I have no biases, but it has been my sad experience with some agencies like the AID that they come with some predetermined value judgments and predetermined courses of action. Thus you will remember the very, very unfortunate seminar we had at the Philippine Columbian where the head of the AID argued very strongly for the foolishness of much of what the Philippines has been doing in the economic field. How ridiculously foolish, he said, and I will tell you this, this, this, and this. You have got to really be developing agriculture, etc. Now, on the other hand, there's much to be said also in terms of castigating the developed countries, because we talk so much about the need for self-reliance without exerting efforts to try to be really self-reliant. Just like some of our politicians, we say, well, why do you give more aid to that country than ours? We want to be sovereign and independent. You cannot really have those two things. I feel that if we want to be really self-reliant, let us try to be, but let us not try to say we are pursuing the goal of self-reliance, and at the same time ask for more and more aid.

I feel that much of the aid that has been given has not changed the situation in terms of social and economic inequalities. I think that Mr. Yasay was perfectly right in his analysis of the situation. I differ only in that, maybe because I've grown older, I shun from using such words as puppet, imperialism, capitalism, socialism, exploitation, and communism. Rather I would analyze a given situation and say, "in this situation these things are wrong, those things are right." After several years of studies on this, I've come to the conclusion that it is misleading to be using these words, because we are not all agreed on what we are talking about. I would say: in our society these are the ills. In this sense therefore I agree with Mr. Yasay that these are the ills of the country. Social and economic inequalities, I think, would be to me the primary problem in our country. I also agree with the inarticulated major premise of Mr. Yasay. As Christians we all come to Church, and believe that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, and we do believe that we are stewards of God's resources and God's property. When we leave the Church on Sundays however, all of a sudden we seem to wear different heads, my car becomes *my* car, my house becomes *my* house, my clothes become *my* clothes, and my food becomes *my* food. So, therefore, this concept of property is operative as an imperium over human beings in our human situation. In other words, property is not just a concept, it is a relationship in our situation. And if we were to improve, even through international measures, the situation in the Philippines, I would dare say that we can hardly improve the economic situation without touching the problem of social and economic inequalities, and first concentrating on these problems. Then, of course, the literature of international economics these days is full of allusions to the need for investments being re-invested, the need for in-

creasing aid mostly through the mechanism of international agencies, and of course the need for nations to be sovereign economically, that is to say, the need for nationals to have control over the productive assets of the country. If we were to talk about domination by one country over another, in fairness, though I think we are to a large extent under American domination, which is not right, it would still be wrong to consider that American domination is the only kind of domination we are suffering. I foresee that ten years from now Japanese domination will be an even greater problem than American domination. Right now we have chemicals, tires, cosmetics, mines, etc.—all of these things to a large extent controlled by American firms. Ten years from now I wonder.

Now all I'm trying to say is that part of our problem, when we talk about international cooperation, is how to help developed countries assume a greater proportion, or own a greater proportion, of the productive assets of their own countries. In other words, part of our task is to help them to be truly sovereign, that is, unhampered by dominants and other stronger metropolitan powers. So, I should like to reiterate that these forums on international affairs meant to help developing countries have not really helped very much because Churches have not yet raised their voices, or perhaps they are not in a position to do so, so that the impact may be strong on the developing countries, so that the human condition in these countries may be improved, and so that generally speaking the quality of human life in the developing countries may be improved.