THE MISEDUCATION OF THE FILIPINO

Prof. Renato Constantino, Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol.1.,No.1 (1970)

Education is a vital weapon of a people striving for economic emancipation, political independence and cultural renaissance. We are such a people. **Philippine education therefore must produce Filipinos** who are aware of their country's problems, who understand the basic solution to these problems, and who **care** enough to have **courage** to work and sacrifice for their country's salvation.

Nationalism in Education

In recent years, in various sectors of our society, there have been nationalist stirrings which were crystallized and articulated by the late **Claro M. Recto**, There were jealous demands for the recognition of Philippine sovereignty on the Bases question. There were appeals for the correction of the iniquitous economic relations between the Philippines and the United States. For a time, Filipino businessmen and industrialists rallied around the banner of the **FILIPINO FIRST** policy, and various scholars and economists proposed economic emancipation as an intermediate goal for the nation. In the field of art, there have been signs of a new appreciation for our own culture. Indeed, there has been much nationalist activity in many areas of endeavor, but **we have yet to hear of a well-organized campaign on the part of our educational leaders for nationalism in education.**

Although most of our educators are engaged in the lively debate on techniques and tools for the improved instructions, **not one** major educational leader has come out for a truly nationalist education. Of course some pedagogical experts have written on some aspects of nationalism in education. However, no comprehensive educational programme has been advanced as a corollary to the programmes for political and economic emancipation. This is a tragic situation because **the nationalist movement is crippled at the outset by a citizenry that is ignorant of our basic ills and is apathetic to our national welfare.**

New Perspective

Some of our economic and political leaders have gained a new perception of our relations with the United States as a result of their second look at Philippine-American relations since the turn of the century. The reaction which has emerged as economic and political nationalism is an attempt on their part to revise the iniquities of the past and to complete the movement started by our revolutionary leaders of 1896. The majority of our educational leaders, however, still continue to trace their direct lineal descent to the first soldier-teachers of the American invasion army. They seem **oblivious to the fact that the educational system and philosophy of which they are proud inheritors were valid only within the framework of American colonialism**. The educational system introduced by the Americans had to correspond and was designed to correspond to the economic and political reality of American conquest.

Capturing Minds

The most effective means of subjugating a people is to capture their minds. Military victory does not necessarily signify conquest. As long as feelings of resistance remain iin the hearts of the vanquished, no conqueror is secure. This is best illustrated by the occupation of the Philippines by the Japanese militarists during the Second World War.

Despite the terroristic regime imposed by the Japanese warlords, the Filipinos were never conquered. Hatred for the Japanese was engendered by their oppressive techniques which in turn were intensified by the stubborn resistance of the Filipino people. Japanese propagandists and

psychological warfare experts, however, saw the necessity of winning the minds of the people. Had the Japanese stayed longer, Filipino children who were being schooled under the auspices of the new dispensation would have grown into strong pillars of the **Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere**. Their minds would have been conditioned to suit the policies of the Japanese imperialists.

The moulding of men's minds is the best means of conquest. **Education, therefore, serves a a weapon in wars of colonial conquest**. This singular fact was well appreciated by the American military commander in the Philippines during the Filipino-American War. According to the census of 1903:

*"....**General Otis** urged and furthered the reopening of schools, himself selecting and ordering the textbooks. many officers, among them chaplains, were detailed as superintendent of schools, and many enlisted men, as teachers..."*

The American military authorities had a job to do. They had to employ all means to pacify a people whose hopes for independence were being frustrated by the presence of another conqueror. The primary reason for the rapid intorduction, on a large scale, of the American public school system in the Philippines was the conviction of the military leaders that no measure could so quickly promote the pacification of the islands as education. **General Arthur McArthur**, in recommending a large appropriation for school purposes, said:

*"...This appropriation is recommended primarily and exclusively as an **adjunct** to military operations **calculated** to pacify the people and to procure and expedite the restoration of tranquility throughout the archipelago..."*

Beginnings of Colonial Education

Thus, from its inception, the educational system of the Philippines was a means of pacifying a people who were defending their newly-won freedom from an invader who had **posed** as an ally. The education of the Filipino under American sovereignty was an instrument of colonial policy. The Filipino has to be educated as a good colonial. Young minds had to be shaped to conform to American ideas. **Indigenous Filipino ideals were slowly eroded in order to remove the last vestiges of resistance**. Education served to attract the people to the new masters and at the same time to dilute their nationalism which had just succeeded in overthrowing a foreign power. The introduction of the American educational system was a means of defeating a triumphant nationalism. As **Charles Burke Elliot** said in his book, ***The Philippines***:

*"...To most Americans it seemed absurd to propose that any other language than English should be used over which their flag floated. But in the schools of India and other British dependencies and colonies and, generally, in **all** colonies, it was and still is customary to use the vernacular in the elementary schools, and the immediate adoption of English in the Philippine schools subjected America to the charge of forcing the language of the conquerors upon a defenseless people.*

Of course, such a system of education as the Americans contemplated could be successful only under the direction of American teachers, as the Filipino teachers who had been trained in Spanish methods were ignorant of the English language...

*Arrangements were promptly made for enlisting a small army of teachers in the United States. At first they came in companies, but soon in battalions. The transport **Thomas** was fitted up for their accomodations and in July, 1901, it sailed from San Francisco with six hundred teachers -a second army of occupation- surely the most remarkable cargo ever carried to an Oriental colony.."*

The American Vice-Governor

The importance of education as a colonial tool was never underestimated by the Americans. This

may be clearly seen in the provision of the **Jones Act** which granted the Filipinos more autonomy. Although the government services were Filipinized, although the Filipinos were being prepared for self-government, the **Department of Education was never entrusted to any Filipino**. Americans always headed this department. This was assured by Article 23 of the **Jones Act** which provided:

"..That there shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate of the United States, a vice-governor of the Philippine Islands, who shall have all the powers of the governor-general in the case of a vacancy or temporary removal, resignation or disability of the governor-general, or in case of his temporary absence; and the said vice-governor shall be the head of the executive department known as the department of Public Instruction, which shall include the bureau of education and the bureau of health, and he may be assigned such other executive duties as the Governor-General may designate..."

Up to 1935, therefore, the head of this department was an American. And when a Filipino took over under the commonwealth, a new generation of "Filipino-American" had already been produced. There was no longer any need for American overseers in this filed because a captive generation had already come of age, thinking and acting like little Americans.

This does not mean, however, that nothing that was taught was of any value. We became literate in English to a certain extent. We were able to produce more men and women who could read and write. We bacame more conversant with the outside world, especially the American world. A more widespread education such as the Americans would have been a real blessing had their educational programme not been the handmaiden of their colonial policy. **Unfortunately for us, the success of education as a colonial weapon was complete and permanent**. In exchange for a smattering of English, we yielded our souls. The stories of **George Washington** and **Abraham Lincoln** made us forget our own nationalism.

The American view of our history turned our heroes into brigands in our own eyes, distorted our vision of our future. The surrender of the Katipuneros was nothing compared to this final surrender, this levelling down of our lst defenses. **Dr. Chester Hunt** characterizes this surrender in these words:

*"...The programme of cultural assimilation combined with a fairly rapid yielding of control resulted in the fairly general acceptance of American culture as the goal of Filipino society with the corollary that **individual Americans were given a status of respect**..."*

This in a nutshell was (and to a great extent still is) the happy result of early educational policy because, within the framework of American colonialism, whenever there was a conflict between American and Filipino goals and interests, the schools guided us **toward thought and action which could forward American interests.**

Goals of American Education

The educational system established by the Americans could not have been for the sole purpose of saving the Filipinos from illiteracy and ignorance. Given the economic and political purposes of American occupation, education had to be consistent with these broad purposes of American colonial policy. The Filipinos had to be trained as citizens of an American colony. The **Benevolent Assimilation** proclamation of President McKinley on December 21, 1898 at a time when Filipino forces were in control of the country except Manila, betrays the intention of the colonizers. **Judge Blount** in his book, ***The American Occupation of the Philippines***, properly comments:

"..Clearly, from the Filipino point of view, the United States was now determined to 'spare them from the dangers of premature independence,' using such force as might be necessary for the accomplishment of that pious purpose..."

Despite the noble aims announced by the American authorities that the Philippines was theirs to protect and guide, the fact still remained that these people were a conquered nation whose national life had to be woven into the pattern of American dominance. Philippine education was shaped by the **overriding factor of preserving and expanding** American control. To achieve this, all separatist tendencies were discouraged. Nay, they had to be condemned as ***subversive***. With this as

the pervasive factor in the grand design of conqueirng a people, the pattern of education, consciously or unconsciously, fostered and established certain attitudes on the part of the governed. These attitudes conformed to the purposes of American occupation.

An Uprooted Race

The first and perhaps the master stroke in the plan to use education as an instrument of colonial policy was the decision to use English as the medium of insturction. English became the wedge that separated the Filipinos from their past and later to separate educated Filipinos from the masses of their countrymen. English introduced the Filipinos to a strange, new world. With American textbooks, Filipinos started learning not only a new language but also a new way of life, alien to their traditions and yet a caricature of their model. This was the beginning of their education. At the same time, it was the beginning of their mis-education, for they learned no longer as Filipinos but as colonials. They had to be disoriented form their nationalist goals because they had to become good colonials. The ideal colonial was the carbon copy of his conqueror, the conformist follower of the new dispensation. He had to forget his past and unlearn the nationalist virtues in order to live peacefully, if not comfortably, under the colonial order. The new Filipino generation learned of the lives of American heroes, sang American songs, and dreamt of snow and Santa Claus.

The nationalist resistance leaders exemplified by **Sakay** were regarded as brigands and outlaws. The lives of Philippine heroes were taught but their nationalist teachings were glossed over. Spain was the villain, America was the savior. To this day, our histories still gloss over the atrocities committed by American occupation troops such as the "water cure" and the "reconcentration camps." Truly, a genuinely Filipino education could not have been devised within the new framework, for to draw from the wellsprings of the Filipino ethos would only have lead to a distinct Philippine identity with interests at variuance with that of the ruling power.

Thus, the Filipino past which had already been quite obliterated by three centuries of Spanish tyranny did not enjoy a revival under American colonialism. On the contrary, the history of our ancestors was taken up as if they were stange and foreign peoples who settled in these shores, with whom we had the most tenuous of ties. We read about them as if we were tourists in a foreign land.

Economic Attitudes

Control of the economic life of a colony is basic to colonial control. Some imperial nations do it harshly but the United States could be cited for the subtlety and uniqueness of its approach. For example, free trade was offered as a generous gift of American altruism. Concomitantly, the educational policy had to support his view and to soften the effects of the slowly tighthening noose around the necks of the Filipinos. The economic motivations of the American in coming to the Philippines were not at all admitted to the Filipinos. As a matter of fact, from the first school-days under the soldier-teachers to the present, Philippine history books have portrayed America as a benevolent nation who came here only to save us from Spain and to spread amongst us the boons of liberty and democracy. The almost complete lack of understanding at present of those economic motivations and of the presence of American interests in the Philippines are the most eloquent testimony to the success of the education for colonials which we have undergone.

What economic attitudes were fostered by American education? It is interesting to note that during the times that the school attempts to inculcate an appreciation for things Philippine, the picture that is presented for the child's admiration is an idealized picture of a rural Philippines, as pretty and as unreal as an **Amorsolo** painting with its carabao, its smiling healthy farmer, the winsome barrio lass in the bright clean patadyong, and the sweet nipa hut. That is the portrait of the Filipino that our education leaves in the minds of the young and it hurst in two ways.

First, it strengthens the belief (and we see this in adults) that the Philippines is essentially meant to be an agricultural country and we can not and should not change that. The result is an apathy toward industrialization. It is an idea they have not met in school. There is further, a fear, born out of that early sterotype of this country as an agricultural heaven, that industrialization is not good for us, that our national environment is not suited for an industrial economy, and that it will only bring social evils which will destroy the idyllic farm life.

Second, this idealized picture of farm life never emphasizes the poverty, the disease, the cultural vacuum, the sheer boredom, the superstition and ignorance of backward farm communities. Those who pursue higher education think of the farm as quaint places, good for an occasional vacation. Their life is rooted in the big towns and cities and there is no interest in revamping rural life because there is no understanding of its economic problems. Interest is limited to aretsian wells and handicraft projects. Present efforts to uplift the conditions of the rural masses merely attack the peripheral problems without admitting the urgent need for basic agrarian reform.

With American education, the Filipinos were not only learning a new language; they were not only forgetting their own language; they were starting to become a new type of American. American ways were slowly being adopted. Our consumption habits were molded by the influx of cheap American goods that came in duty-free. The pastoral economy was extolled because this conformed with the colonial economy that was being fostered. Our books extolled the western nations as peopled by superior beings because they were capable of manufacturing things that we never thought we were capable of producing. We were pleased by the fact that our raw materials could pay for the American consumption goods that we had to import. Now we are used to these type of goods, and it is a habit we find hard to break, to the detriment of our own economy.

We never thought that we too could industrialize because in school we were taught that we were primarily an agricultural country by geographical location and by the innate potentiality of our people. We were one with our fellow Asians in believing that we were not cut out for an industrialized economy. That is why before the war, we looked down upon goods made in Japan despite the fact that Japan was already producing commodities at par with the West. We could never believe Japan, an Asian country, could attain the same superiority as America, Germany or England. And yet, it was "Made in Japan" airplanes, battleships and armamentrs that dislodged the Americans and the British from their positions of dominance during the Second World War. This is the same attitude that has put us out of step with our Asian neighbors who already realize that colonialism has to be extirpated from their lives if they want to be free, prosperous, and happy.

Transplantation of Political Institutions

American education in effect trasplanted American poitical institutions and ideas into the Philippines. Senator Recto, in his last major address at the University of the Philippines, explained the reason for this. Speaking of political parties, Recto said:

"...It is to be deplored that our major political parties were born and nurtured before we had attained the status of a free democracy. The result was that they have come to be caricatures of their foreign model with its known characterisitics --patronage, division of spoils, political bossism, partisan treatment of vital national issues. I say caricatures because of their chronic shortsightedness respecting those ultimate objectives the attainment of which was essential to a true and lasting national independence. All throughout the period of American colonization, they allowed themselves to become more and more the tools of colonial rule and less and less the interpreters of the people's will and ideals. Through their complacency, the new colonizer was able to fashion, in exchange for sufferance of oratorical plaints for independence, and for patronage, rank and sinecure, a regime of his own choosing, for his own aims, and in his own self-interest."

The Americans were confronted with the dilemma of transplanting their political institutions and yet luring the Filipinos into a state of captivity. It was understandable for American authorities to think that democracy can only mean the American type of democracy, and thus they foisted on the Filipinos the institutions that were valid for their own people. Indigenous institutions which could have led to the evolution of native democratic ideas and institutions were disregarded.

No wonder we too look with hostility upon countries who try to develop their own political institutions according to the needs of their people without being bound by western political procedures. We have been made to believe in certain political doctrines as absolute and the same for all peoples. An example of this is the belief in the freedom of the press. Here, the consensus is that we cannot

nationalize the press because it would be depriving the foreigners of the exercise of the freedom of the press. This may be valid for strong countries like the United States where there is no threat of foreign domination, but certainly, this is dangerous for an emergent nation like the Philippines where foreign control has yet to be weakened.

Re-examination Demanded

The new demands for economic emancipation and the assertion of our political sovereignty leave our educators no other choice but to re-examine their philosophy, their values, and their general approach to the making of the Filipino who will institute, support and preserve the nationalist aims. To persist in the continuance of a system which was born under the exigencies of colonial rule, to be timid in the face of traditional opposition would only result in the evolution of an anomalous educational system which lags behind the urgent economic and political changes that the nation is experiencing.

What then are the nationalist tasks for Philippine education? Education must both be seen not as an acquisition of information but as the making of man so that he may function most effectively and and usefully within his own society. Therefore, education can not be divorced from the society of a definite country at a definite time. It is a fallacy to think that educational goals should be the same everywhere and that therefore what goes into the making of a well-educated American is the same as what should go into the making of the well-educated Filipino. This would be true only if the two societies were at the same ploitical, cultural, annd economic level and had the same political, cultural and economic goals.

But what happened in this country? Not only do we imitate Western education, we have patterned our education after the most technologically advanced western nations. The gap between the two societies is very large. In fact, they are two entirely different societies with different goals.

Adoption of western values

Economically, the US is an industrial nation. It is a fully developed nation, economically speaking. Our country has a colonial economy with a tiny industrial base -in other words , we are backward and underdeveloped. Politically, the U.S. is not only master of its own house; its control and influence extends to many other countries all over the world. The Philippines has only lately emerged from formal colonial status and it still must complete its political and economic independence.

Culturally, the U.S. has a vigorously and distinctively American culture. It is a nation whose cultural instituions have developed freely, indigenously without control and direction from foreign sources, whose ties to its cultural past are clear and proudly celebrated because no foreign power has imposed upon its people a wholesale inferiority complex, because no foreign culture has been superimposed upon it destroying, distorting, its own past and alienating the people from their own cultural heritage.

What are the characteristics of America today which spring from its economic, political and cultural status? What should be the characteristics of our own education as dictated by our own economic, political and cultural conditions? To contrast both is to realize how inimical to our best interests and progress is our adoption of some of the basic characteristics and values of American education.

By virtue of its leadership and its economic interests in many parts of the world, the United States has an internationalist orientation based securely on a well-grounded, long held nationalistic viewpoint. U.S. education has no urgent need to stress the development of American nationalism in its young people. Economically, politically, culturally, the U.S. is the master of its own house. American education, therefore, understandably lays little emphasis on the kind of nationalism we Filipinos need.

Instead, it stresses internationalism and underplays nationalism. This sentiment is noble and good, but when it is inculcated in a people who have either forgotten nationalism or never imbibed it, it can cause untold harm. The emphasis is on universal brotherhood, on friendship for other nations, without the firm foundation of nationalism which would give our people the feeling of pride in our own products and vigilance over our natural resources, has had very harmful results. Chief among these is the transformation of our national virtue of hospitality into a stupid vice which hurts us and makes us the willing dupes of predatory foreigners.

UnFilipino Filipinos

Thus we complacently allow aliens to gain control of our economy. We are even proud of those who amass wealth in our country, publishing laudatory articles about their financial success. We love to hear foreigners call our country a paradise on earth, and we never stop to think that it is a paradise only for them but not for the millions of our countrymen. When some of our more intellectually emancipated countrymen spearhead moves for nationalism, for nationalization of this or that endeavor, do the majority of Filipinos support such moves?

No, there is apathy because there is no nationalism in our hearts which will spur us to protect and help our countrymen first. Worse, some Filipinos will even worry about the sensibilities of foreigners lest they think ill of us for supposedly discriminating against them. And worst of all, many Filipinos will even oppose nationalistic legislation either because they have become the willing servants of foreign interests or because, in their distorted view, we Filipinos can not progress without the help of foreign capital and foreign entrepreneurs.

In this part of the world, we are well nigh unique in our generally non-nationalistic outlook. What is the source of this shameful characteristic of ours? **One important source is surely the schools.** There is little emphasis on nationalism. Patriotism has been taught us, yes, but in general terms of love of country, respect for the flag, appreciation for the beauty of our countryside, and other similarly innocuous manifestations of our nationality.

The pathetic results of this failure of Philippine education is a citizen amazingly naive and trusting in its relations with foreigners, devoid of the capacity to feel indignation even in the face of insults to the nation, ready to acquiesce and even to help aliens in the despoliation of our national wealth. Why are the great majority of our people so complaisant about foreign economic control? Much of the blame must be laid at the door of colonial education. Colonial education has not provided us with a realistic attitude toward other nations, especially Spain and the United States. The emphasis in our study of history has been on the great gifts that our conquerors have bestowed upon us. A mask of benevolence was used to hide the cruelties and deceit of early American occupation.

The noble sentiments expressed by McKinley were emphasized rather than the ulterior motives of conquest. The myth of fiendship and special relations is even now continually invoked to camouflage the continuing iniquities in our relationship. Nurtured in this kind of education, the Filipino mind has come to regard centuries of colonial status as a grace from above rather than a scourge. Is it any wonder then that having regained our independence we have forgotten how to defend it? Is it any wonder that when leaders like **Claro M. Recto** try to teach us how to be free, the great majority of the people find it difficult to grasp those nationalistic principles that are the staple food of other Asian minds? The American architects of our colonial education labored shrewdly and well.

The Language Problem

The most vital problem that has plagued Philippine education has been the question of language. Today, experiments are still going on to find out whether it would be more effective to use the native language. This is indeed ridiculous since an individual can not be more at home in any other language than his own. In every sovereign country, the use of its own language in education is so

natural no one thinks it could be otherwise.

But here, so great has been our disorientation caused by our colonial education that the use of our own language is a controversial issue, with more Filipinos against than in favor! Again, as in the economic field Filipinos believe they can not survive without America, so in education we believe no education can be true education unless it is based on proficiency in English.

Rizal already foresaw the tragic effects of a colonial education when, speaking through Simon, he said:

"...You ask for equal rights, the Hispanization of your customs, and you don't see that what you are begging for is suicide, the destruction of your nationality, the annihilation of your fatherland, the consecration of tyranny! What will you be in the future? A people without character. A nation without liberty -everything you have will be borrowed, even your very defects!...What are you going to do with Castilian, the few of you who will speak it? Kill off your own originality, subordinate your thoughts to other brains, and instead of freeing yourselves, make yourselves slaves indeed! Ninetenths of those of you who pretend to be enlightened are renegades to your country! He among you who talks that language neglects his own in such a way that he neither writes it nor understands it, and how many have I not seen who pretended not to know a single word of it!.."

It is indeed unfortunate that teaching in the native language is given up to second grade only, and the question of whether beyond this it should be English or Filipino is still unsettled. Many of our educational experts have written on the language problem, but there is an apparent timidity on the part of these experts to come out openly for the urgent need of discarding the foreign language as the medium of instruction inspite of remarkable results shown by the use of the native language. Yet, the deleterious effects of using English as the medium of instruction are many and serious. What Rizal said about Spanish has been proven to be equally true for English.

Barrier to Democracy

Under the system maintained by Spain in the Philippines,educational opportunities were so limited that learning became the possession of a chosen few. This enlightened group was called the ilustrados. They constituted the elite. Most of them came from the wealthy class because this was the only class that could afford to send its sons abroad to pursue higher learning. Learning, therfore, became a badge of privilege. There was a wide gap between the ilustrados and the masses. Of course, many of the ilustrados led the propaganda movement, but they were mostly reformers who wanted reforms within the framework of Spamish colonialism. In a way, they were also captives of Spanish education. Many of them were the **first** to capitulate to the Americans, and the first leaders of the Filipinos during the early years of the American regime came from this class. Later they were supplanted by the products of American education.

One of the ostensible reason for imposing English as the medium of instruction was the fact that English was the language of democracy, that through this tongue the Filipinos would imbibe the American way of life which makes no distinction between rich and poor and which gives equal opportunities. Under this thesis, the existence of an ilustrado class would not long endure because all Filipinos would be enlighthened and educated. There would be no privileged class. In the long run however, English perpetuated the existence of the ilustrados --American ilustrados who, like their counterparts, were strong supporters of the way of life of the new motherland.

Now we have a small group of men who can articulate their thoughts in English, a wider group who can read and speak in fairly comprehensible English and a great mass that hardly expresses itself in any language. All of these groups are hardly articulate in their native tongues because of the

neglect of our native dialects, if not the deliberate attempts to prevent their growth.

The result is a leadership that fails to understand the needs of the masses because it is a leadership that can communicate with the masses only in general and vague terms. This is one reason why political leadership remains in a vacuum. This is the reason why issues are never fully discussed. This is the reason why orators with the best inflections, demagogues who rant and rave, are the ones who flourish in the political arena. English has created a barrier between the monopolists of power and the people. English has become a status symbol, while the native tongues are looked down upon. English has given rise to a bifurcated society of fairly educated men and the masses who are easily swayed by them. A clear evidence of the failure of English education is the fact that politicians address the masses in their dialects. Lacking mastery of the dialect, the politician merely deals in generalities.

Because of their lack of command of English, the masses have gotten used to only half-understanding what is said to them in English. They appreciate the sounds without knowing the sense. This is a barrier to democracy. Peole don't even think it is their duty to know, or that they are capable of understanding national problems. Because of the language barrier, therefore, they are content to leave everything to their leaders. This is one of the root causes of their apaathy, their regionalism or parochialism. Thus, English which was supposedly envisoned as the language of democracy is in our country a barrier to the full flowering of democracy.

In 1924 the eminent scholar **Najib Saleeby** wrote on the language of education in the Philippines. he deplored the attempt to impose English as the medium of instruction. Saleeby, who was an expert on the Malayo-Polynesian languages, showed that Tagalog, Visayan, Ilocano, and other Philippine dialects belong to the same linguistic tree. He said:

"..The relation the Tagalog holds to the Bisaya or to the Sulu is very much like or closer than that of the Spanish to the Italian. An educated Tagalog from Batangas, and an educated Bisayan from Cebu can learn to understand each other in a short space of time and without much effort. A Cebu student living in Manila can acquire practical use and understanding of Tagalog in less than three months. The relation between Tagalog and Malay is very much the same as that of Spanish and French..."

This was said forty-two years ago when Tagalog movies, periodicals and radio programmes had not yet attained popularity theat they enjoy today all over the country. Saleeby further states:

"...Empirically neither the Spanish nor the English could be a suitable medium for public instruction in the Philippine Islands. It does not seem possible that either of them can become the common or national language of the Archipelago. Three centuries of Spanish rule and education failed to check use of the vernacular.A very small minority of Filipinos could speak Spanish in 1898, but the great mass of the people could neither use nor understand it. Twenty-five years of intensive English education has produced no radical change. More people at present speak English than spanish, but the great majority hold on to the local dialect. The Spanish policy might be partially justified on colonial and financial ground, but the American policy can not be so defended. It should receive popular free choice, or give good proof of its practicability by showing actual and satisfactory results. The people have as yet had no occasion to declare their free will, and the present policy must be judged on its own merits and on conclusive evidence...But teaching English broadcast and enforcing its official use is one thing, and its adoption as the basis of education and as the sole medium of public instruction is a completely different matter. This point can not be fully grasped or comprehended without special attention and experience in colonial education and administration. Such policy is exalted and ambitious to an extreme degree..

..It aims at something unknown before in human affairs. It is attempting to do what ancient Persia, Rome, Alexander the great and napoleon failed to accomplish. It aims at nothing less than the obliteration of the tribal differences of the Filipinos, the substitution of English for the vernacular dialects as a home tongue, and making English the national common language of the Archipelago."

That is more true today. very few college sutdents can speak except in mixed English and the dialect. Our congress has compounded their confusion by a completely unwarranted imposition of 24 untis of Spanish.

Impediments to Thought

A foreign language is an impediment to instruction. Instead of learning directly through the native tongue, a child has first to master a foreign tongue, memorize its vocabulary, get accustomed to its sounds, intonations, accents, just to discard the language later when he is out of school. This does not mean that foreign language should not be taught. Foreign language should be taught and can be taught more easily **after** one has mastered his **own** tongue.

Even if the Americans were motivated by the sincere desire of unifying the country through the means of a common tongue, the abject results of instruction in English through the six decades fo American education should have awakened our educators to the fact that the learning process has been disrupted by the **imposition** of a foreign language. From 1935, when the Institute of National Language was organized, very feeble attempts have been made to abandon the teaching of English. Our educators seem to constantly avoid the subject of language; inspite of the clear evidence of rampant ignorance among the products of the present educational system.

This has resulted in the denial of education to a vast number of children who after the primary grades no longer continue schooling. Inspite of the fact that the national language today is understood all over the country, **no one is brave enough** to advocate its use as the medium of instruction. There are arguments about the dearth of materials in the national language, but these are feeble arguments that merely disguise the **basic opposition** of our educational leaders to the use of what is native. Thus the products of the Philippine educational system, barring very few exceptions, are Filipinos who do **not have a mastery of English** because it is foreign, and who do **not have a mastery of their native tongue** because of the deliberate neglect of those responsible for the education of the citizens of the nation.

A foreign tongue as a medium of instruction constitutes an impediment to learning and to thinking because a student first has to master new sounds, new inflections, and new sentence constructions. His innermost thoughts find difficulty of expression, and lack of expression in turn prevents the further development of thought. Thus we find in our society a deplorable lack of serious thinking among great sections of the population. We half understand books and periodicals written in English. We find it an ordeal to communicate with each other through a foreign medium, and yet we have so neglected our native language that we find ourselves at a loss expressing ourselves in this language.

Language is a tool of the thinking process. Through language, thought develops, and the development of thought leads to further development of language. But **when a language becomes a barrier of thought, the thinking process is impeded or retarded** and we have the resultant cultural stagnation. Creative thinking, analytical thinking, abstract thinking are not fostered because the foreign language makes the student prone to memorization. Because of the mechanical process of learning, he is able to get only a general idea but not a deeper understanding. So, the tendency of students is to study in order to be able to answer correctly and to pass the examinations and thereby earn the required credits. Independent thinking is smothered because the language of learning ceases to be the language of communication outside the classroom. **A student is mainly concerned with the acquisition of information. He is seldom able to utilize this information for deepening his understanding of his society's problems**.

Our Institute of National Language is practically neglected. It should be one of the main pillars of an independent country. Our educators are wary about proposing the immediate adoption of the national language as the medium of instruction because of what they consider as opposition of other language groups. **This is indicative of our colonial mentality**. **Our educators do not see any**

opposition to the use of a foreign language but fear opposition to the use of the national language just because it is based on one of the main dialects. The fact that one can be understood in any part of the Philippines through the national language, the fact that periodicals in the national language and local movies have a mass following all over the islands, shows that, given the right support, the national language would take its proper place.

Language is the main problem, therefore. Experience has shown that children who are taught in their native tongue learn more easily and better than those taught in English. Records of the Bureau of Public Schools will support this. But mere teaching in the national language is not enough. There are other areas that demand immediate attention.

Philippine history must be rewritten from the point of view of the Filipino. Our economic problems must be presented in the light of nationalism and independence. These are only some of the problems that confront the nationalist approach to education. Government leadership and supervision is essential. Our educators need the support of legislators in this regard. In this connection, the private sector has also to be strictly supervised.

The Private Sector

Before the Second World War, products of the Philippine public school system looked down upon their counterparts in the private schools. It is generally accepted that graduates of the public schools at that time were superior to the products of the private institutions in point of learning. There were exclusive private institutions but these were reserved for the well-to-do. These schools did not necessarily reflect superiority of instruction. But they reflected superiority of social status.

Among students of the public schools, there was still some manifestation of concern for national problems. Vestiges of the nationalistic tradition of our revolution remained in the consciousness of those parents who had been caught in the mainstream of the rebellion, and these were passed on to the young. On the other hand, apathy to the national problems was marked among the more affluent private school students whose families had readily accepted American rule.

Today, public schools are looked down upon. Only the poor send their children to these schools. Those who can afford it, or those who have social pretensions, send their children to private institutions. The result has been a boon to private education, a boon that unfortunately has seen the proliferation of diploma mills. There were two concomitant tendencies that went with this trend. First was the commercialization of education. A lowering of standards resulted because of the inadequate facilities of the public schools and the commercialization in the private sector. It is a well known fact that classes in many private schools are packed and teachers are overloaded in order to maximize profits. Second, some private schools which are owned and operated by foreigners and whose social science courses are handled by aliens flourished. While foreigners may not be anti-Filipino, they definitely can not be nationalistic in orientation. They think as foreigners and as private interests. Thus, the proliferation of private schools and the simultaneous deterioration of public schools have resulted not only in lower standards but also in a definitely un-Filipino education.

Some years ago, there was a move to grant curricular freedom to certain qualified private institutions as well as wider leeway for self-regulation. This was a retrograde step. It is true that this move was in answer to charges that state supervision would enhance regimentation. But in a country that is just awakening to nationalist endeavors, it is the duty of a nationalist administration to see to it that the moulding of minds is safely channeled along nationalist lines. The autonomy of private institutions may be used to subvert nationalist sentiments especially when ownership of schools and handling of the social sciences are not yet Filipinized. Autonomy of private institutions would only dilute nationalist sentiments either by foreign subversions or by commercialization.

Other Educational media

While the basic defect in the educational system has been responsible for the lack of nationalist ideals, there are other media and facilities that negate whatever gains are made in some sectors of the educational field. The almost unilateral source of news, films and other cultural materials tends to distort our perspective. american films and comics, American press services, fellowships in America, have all contributed to the almost total Americanization of our attitudes. A **distinct Filipino culture can not prevail** if an avalanche of western cultural materials suffocates our relatively puny efforts in this direction.

Needed: Filipinos

The education of the Filipino must be a Filipino education. It must be based on the needs of the nation and the goals of the nation. The object is not merely to produce men and women who can read and write or who can add and subtract. The primary objectis to produce a citizenry that appreciates and is conscious of its nationhood and has national goals for the betterment of the community, and not an anarchic mass of people who know how to take care of themselves only. **Our students hear of Rizal and Bonifacio but are their teachings related to our present problems or do they merely learn of anecdotes and incidents that prove interesting to the child's imagination?**

We have learned to use American criteria for our problems and we look at our prehistory and our past with the eyes of a visitor. A lot of information is learned but attitudes are not developed. The proper regards for things Philippine, **the selfish concern over the national fate --these are not at all imbedded in the consciousness of students**. Children and adolescents go to school to get a certificate or diploma. They try to learn facts but the patriotic attitude is not acquired because of too much emphasis on forms.

What should be the basic objective of education in the Philippines? Is it merely to produce men and women who can read and write? If this is the only purpose, then education is directionless. **Education should first of all assure national survival**. No amount of economic and political policy can be successful if the educational programme does not imbue prospective ciizens with the proper attitudes that will ensure the implementation of these goals and policies. Philippine educational policies should be geared to the making of Filipinos. These policies should see to it that schools produce men and women with minds and attitudes that are attuned to the needs of the country.

Under previous colonial regimes, education saw to it that the Filipino mind was subservient to that of the master. The foreign overlords were esteemed. We were not taught to view them objectively, seeing their virtues as well as their faults. This led out citizens to form a distorted opinion of the foreign masters and also of themselves. **We must now think of ourselves, of our salvation, of our future.** And unless we prepare the minds of the young for this endeavor, we shall always be a pathetic peole with no definite goals and no assurance of preservation.