

RESPONSE

by CECILIO LOPEZ

President Romulo, Dean Fonacier, colleagues whom I now envy for their youth, and friends:

NO HEAVIER PUNISHMENT CAN BE INFLICTED ON A COLLEAGUE THAN TO make him speak after President Romulo. Anticipating nothing more than a friendly tête-a-tête, I thought there was no need to scribble even a few guide notes for this afternoon. But after having seen my name following that of President Romulo, I convinced myself that prudence is the better part of valor, if I were to forestall the possible onset of disturbances in my vocal apparatus, which can be embarrassing indeed. Therefore, this draft.

It is a tradition in European universities—a tradition wisely adopted in American colleges—to honor a colleague upon reaching a milestone in his career, generally upon retirement, by dedicating or presenting to him a *Festchrift* or *Festgabe* (in German speaking countries), a *Festschrift* (in Scandinavian countries), a *Hommages* or *Mélanges offerts a* (in France), a *Studi* or *Scritti in onore* (in Italy), a *Estudios dedicados* or *Homenajes a* (in Spanish speaking countries), and in English speaking countries an *Anniversary Issue* or *Jubilee Volume*, or succinctly simply *To* or *For . . . on his . . .* (Those dedicatory studies are not to be confused with memorial volumes.)

This series of lectures is quite unique for several reasons. As far as I can recall, this is the first of its kind held in the U.P., and that it is given in my honor which, frankly speaking, I don't deserve (because I have not accomplished anything extraordinary which a member of the faculty could not have accomplished under similar circumstances), that makes it doubly significant for me. And when, further, the occasion is honored by the presence of President Romulo who took time out of his usual tight schedule, to share with us words of counsel and inspiration, this occasion is, indeed, for me very memorable . . . , threefold memorable. I am deeply touched, to say the least, very thankful *to all*, particularly to my younger colleagues who started what I believe should be a practice in the U.P. For in academic circles, an honor like this one is highly treasured by the recipient as a token that his toils have not been in vain. It simply is not matched by material rewards.

WHEN AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE APPROACHING TWILIGHT OF HIS CAREER, the feeling of the need for imminent geriatric consultation sets in, one is inclined to reminisce. But I will not bore you with reminiscences. All that I can say is, that after more than four decades—starting in the Department of Zoology as a young nervous novice of an assistant instructor for which nervousness I was not perhaps entirely to blame because I was then working with Professor Day, spelled day, and Professor Light, spelled light, and, believe me, as far as their relations were concerned, this particular day and this particular light simply defied the natural laws of solar rhythms); as a too conscious instructor in the Department of Modern Languages (teaching languages which in those years were ideologically disparate, namely, French and German); as the inevitable successor to the head of the Department of Oriental Languages (I say inevitable because no other was available); as a willing compromiser in the solution of the task assigned by constitutional mandate to the Institute of National Language (which solution I am not sure now is the best one); and after WW II as an enthusiastic associate in the organization of the U.P. Graduate School; and lastly, ending up as a mellowing co-gatherer of the stray strands of the Institute of Asian Studies after storm and stress left it prostrate—yes, after all these transformations, I believe I can be allowed the luxury of claiming that, whether for better or for worse, I have played my part. But these were of yesteryears. And there are still some unfinished business.

WHEN DEAN FONACIER AND I WERE IN THAT RANK WHEN OUR VOICES were like the proverbial shout in the wilderness, we had been dreaming of the day when the U.P. would institute a program of Philippine studies. The reasons were then, and are more so now, so obvious to need detailing. When we took over the Institute of Asian Studies, the opportunity presented itself, and Philippine studies is now the core of its program. This core is dovetailed, synchronized, as it were, with course offerings on other countries in Asia by the cooperating disciplines. To be sure, there are still gaps, many gaps, in the program. Happily, the call of President Romulo for a five-year development program came very apropos. And we submitted one such program for the IAS. If our reading of the weather-vane over at Quezon Hall is correct, and I think, it is, then there is every reason for optimism about the future of Philippine and Asian studies in the U.P. Mr. President, in terms of area coverage and preparation of the staff in the disciplines, including a small library, the nucleus is there, and a healthy one it is, as witness the quality of the papers read here. All that this nucleus needs is some encouragement and support. This is one unfinished business.

ANOTHER IS VERY CLOSE TO MY HEART, NAMELY, LINGUISTICS . . . , as linguistics, not as fiction. In linguistics we have hardly explored, much less mined, the veins of a veritable treasure trove. There are no reliable data on the approximate, even approximate, number of languages and dialects in the Philippines. So far no passable descriptive grammar has been written and no dictionary worthy of the name compiled, whether monolingual or bilingual, of any one single Philippine language. No comprehensive research has been undertaken on the extent and degree of relationship of the Philippine languages among themselves and with those of the neighboring countries, or of the quantitative and qualitative coverage of our borrowings and adaptations. Research on bilingualism and on the retrieval of less-known languages which may soon disappear is practically null. (Dr. Constantino deals with similar problems more in detail in his paper.)* We are still quite ignorant of much in our languages which can shed light on our history, on the routes of the peopling of the Philippines along geographical and time axes, on the analysis of our social structure and systems of kindship, on the interpretation of our psychology and value judgments, say, in economics, to mention only a few research possibilities. And may we append a reminder that in area studies linguistics is at least ancillary, if not central.

The other unfinished business is a branch of my immediate interest in the disciplines, and in which the U. P. can also take the leadership. I mean the role of linguistics in language learning, popularly known as "applied linguistics", (Like any other applied discipline, in applied linguistics the "applier" must have had a rigorous training in linguistics, if success is to be expected.) We have been hearing comments on the deteriorating control of the English language by Filipino students, so much so that to listen to a conversation in this language, we are told, is to be a spectator in comedy of errors. That the texts and the technique used in the teaching of Tagalog repel rather than attract the students. No less adverse are the comments on the failure of the students to acquire even a winking acquaintance with the Spanish language after completion of twenty-four units (i.e. eight academic semesters or four calendar years). This is how the picture now looks with respect to those language. But the U.P. should be in a position to do more in matters of languages. It is axiomatic that a Filipino college graduate, like his counterpart in other countries, should know a foreign language other than the medium of instruction. It is further axiomatic that in small countries, like the Philippines, there should be an elite corps of language specialists who can be relied on for internal administration as well as for international rela-

* See paper of Dr. Ernesto Constantino entitled "Some Problems of Philippine Linguistics" printed in this volume. [ed.]

tions, if the country is not to depend on foreigners whose loyalty may not be as unassailable as that of the native born. Whether for remedial purposes to improve control of the English language, or as a technique to render the study of Tagalog more palatable, or to facilitate the acquisition of Spanish and other foreign languages, applied linguistics can be the answer. Right now, there is a potential core of Filipinos trained in applied linguistics whose knowledge and experience can be exploited to advantage, when coordinated under competent leadership.

In enumerating the unfinished business, I use the pronoun "we" advisedly. I would like to emphasize that in that use, although not overly expressed, the antecedent of "we" is Filipinos (without excluding foreigners who are qualified to cooperate with our approval).

In closing, "What will you do after retirement?", I have been asked by friends who are solicitous of my welfare. The post-retirement years will not necessarily be an academic cul-de-sac. There are some overtures which are tempting enough to encourage me to put finishing touches to several projects which are in varying degree of completion. And when the time comes that these projects shall have been completed, then I will have the opportunity to realize the ardent hope to dedicate them to this University . . . , this University to which I owe so much and yet have given so little in return.

President Romulo, Dean Fonacier, and friends, I can not, leave this Room-223 in the College of Arts and Sciences without reiterating my most profound thanks to all.