

## OUR NEW ASIAN ACADEMIC ORIENTATION\*

*Dr. Carlos P. Romulo*

President, University of the Philippines

IN MY ADDRESS BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1963, twenty-seven goals were set for the University for the year 1964. Among them, point number nineteen reads as follows:

Opening and strengthening of sustained contacts with other academic institutions in the Southeast Asian and neighboring regions, to effect an expanded area of scholarly cooperation in furtherance of the University's mission to becoming a regional center.

I now wish to report to this body on my efforts in this direction, particularly, in connection with our visits to the universities of Thailand, Indonesia, and India. Recently, I have also been in contact with the University of Malaysia at Kuala Lumpur. This will also be a progress report on decisions subsequent to these visits.

One reason for reporting to you now stems from the urgency with which I consider this matter. Events and sentiments discussed in my report to the Board of Regents underscore the timeliness of the follow-through of our basic purposes which I call upon all of you to effect. Not only the openness with which our overall mission was received, but also the favorable responses that our specific proposals elicited justify my feeling that we have come upon solid ground on which to build with confidence. But we must not allow the dust to settle.

The academic issues which these visits raised involve almost everyone present: heads of various units, the entire faculty; if you will allow your president to be occasionally unreasonable in his demands, this is one of those times, for in future you will be asked to be more innovative, more imaginative, and to work a notch harder, than you expected. For our visits open up new possibilities which can, and should, be explored without the hesitation which the unfamiliar often evoke in us. These issues, for instance, in-

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volve a re-orientation of our academic programs, enriching them with new emphases, introducing novel points-of-view, and accommodating ourselves to the unique needs and the unaccustomed ways of our colleagues from Asia.

Far too long have we conversed exclusively in one *forum* of the academic mansion; and where, as in Europe, the true scholar since ancient times to the present have ignored political and military boundaries to beat a path to the centers of learning wherever they might be—in Heidelberg, the Sorbonne, Oxford—here in our region very little of such activity is perceptible. I find this state-of-affairs to be wholly unjustified, least of all by lack of initiative on the part of the University of the Philippines, an institution which is not unreceptive to intellectual commerce with other nations, and hence should be rectified just as soon as we find the will, and the resources, to do something about it.

In this our trip the initiative was wholly ours; none questioned it nor doubted our motives. What remains to be done is the carrying-out of general terms of agreements arrived at, as well as specific provisions that appear to face no serious obstacles in their implementation, such as for instance the exchange of publications, which in fact we started with our donation of University of the Philippines books and journals to the various universities visited. Some points require long and complicated negotiations; it is on these where we shall need the unstinting cooperation of all departments affected by this project. As you know, the real purpose was to open the way, first by appropriate action at both the ministerial and university levels, and involving top officials at these levels, toward a freer and a more active exchange between the University of the Philippines and the universities of these countries. As envisioned, exchange will take place in terms of students, faculty—teaching and research—books and publications, credits and degrees. If done, such exchanges are expected to enliven and enrich the flow of ideas, raise standards, project each other's achievements, dissolve academic insularity, and give proof of our growing interest in, and identification with, cultures which have problems and features much like our own.

Our proposals were embodied in eight propositions submitted to university heads in these three countries (Appendix A). I should like now to report the varying responses to these proposals.

Among the three countries, Indonesia appears to be the most eager to begin a system of exchange with the University of the Philippines. Besides agreeing to the specific terms of exchange and urging their early realization, Rector Sjarif Thajeb of the University of Indonesia, acting for all other universities in Indonesia, also agreed to the establishment of the machinery to implement the exchange, in the form of a permanent Council for Academic Cooperation which will be set up to function as liaison, to determine policy, and to oversee the actual exchanges. (The details of this agreement are found in the Joint Statement signed by Rector Thajeb and myself, Appendix B.) In the spirit of this agreement I propose that we take the necessary steps immediately to convene this Council.

Even as we plan, I am pleased to inform you that the University of the Philippines has already sent one of its faculty — from the institute of Asian Studies—to study Indonesian language and culture at the University of Indonesia, within the framework of this agreement and the 1959 cultural treaty between the Philippines and Indonesia. Furthermore, I am recommending the establishment of two scholarships for Indonesian student here, and I hope soon to complete arrangements to bring Indonesian professors to the University of the Philippines. As much as practicable all arrangements will be done on a reciprocal basis. The question as to what academic fields shall be covered by these exchanges will be left open at this time, or until such time as we are able to determine priorities in accordance with plans for development. At the moment the most serious deficiency is in the cultural field, that is, in Asian—Philippine and Indonesian—Studies. But there is no reason why our efforts cannot embrace other fields as well when the need arises.

Any exchange with Indonesia under this project will be in addition to existing exchange programs; our aim is to expand as well as to intensify. One difficulty that may stand in the path of this objective, but which is certainly not insuperable, is that of language. We find, however, that English is widely read and understood among Indonesian intellectuals, and although Bahasa Indonesia is still the language of instruction. English is taught and used as a second language in the universities.

The case of Thailand is somewhat different from that of Indonesia or that of India, for reasons touched upon in my larger report. The movement of students has been mostly in one direction

in recent years: from Thailand to the Philippines, in ever-increasing numbers, owing to the limited opportunities for higher education in Thailand. Filipinos going to Thailand to study are few, and mainly because of the difficult language barrier, the number may not easily be enlarged. Exchange with Thailand, therefore, may have to be confined to special studies, such as Thai language, culture, and history, or in areas where scholarly interest motivates the learning of a complex language. On the other hand, it is easier to expand the numbers of Thai students in the University of the Philippines.

In any case the area of greatest concern to me is that which will serve to lift the veil of ignorance between our people and the people of Thailand. Thus, the problem, as I see it, is to stimulate interest among Filipino youth for studies pertaining to the Buddhist and Islamic parts of peninsular Southeast Asia, and *pari-passu*, to generate interest in Thailand for Philippine as well as regional studies.

Filipino students going to Thailand face still another problem. This is the problem of the number of years required for pre-collegiate training. In Thailand, the total is twelve, while in the Philippines only ten or eleven are required, putting our students at a disadvantage in this respect. Many of you are also aware of the problem of equivalences and accreditation, one on which, fortunately, our Executive Vice-President Dr. Enrique T. Virata has spent a great deal of thought, together with our colleagues in the ASAIHL and SEATO. From these studies we expect some answers to an admittedly knotty problem.

Considering all these, it was encouraging the way the universities of Thailand, through Prince Wan, the Vice-Chancellor of Thammasat University, responded to our proposals. Prince Wan assured me that the matter is under careful study by university officials; I hope soon to receive word on the results of their study. That these will be positive I have very little doubt, for everywhere we received assurances of their esteem for the University of the Philippines and the kind of training that we provide. The products of our relationship, incidentally, were in evidence at the highest levels, in terms of the University of the Philippines — educated Thais who have occupied, and still occupy, high positions in the Thai community. The fact, too, that Thailand is proud of an an-

cient civilization, and has taken tremendous strides toward modernity, is proof that we can learn much from them.

India, the cultural matrix from which the civilizations nearer us derive, presents the scholar with a breadth to span, and a depth to plumb, that characterize no other culture in this region. No one can adequately apprehend the Asian mind and spirit who does not attempt to understand India. And if the cultural riches of India are not enough for the student whose bias is progress, then India is ready, even now, to instruct us on her experiences with growth, and her commitment to a better life for her teeming millions, via the avenues of Western science and technology. In truth, with the exception of Japan, India has gone farthest in this region in the adoption and use of modern techniques of production, in medicine, and even in the social sciences. I believe that India will soon be ready to pass on the lessons of her development to us, if the volume and the quality of her research and other publications are any indication of this.

For this reason, I am particularly anxious that we maintain a lively interchange with the Indian academic world. In many fields we are probably abreast of India; in others, we complement each other. In any case, a continuing dialogue between the Philippines and India is essential if we are to discharge the mission we have set for ourselves in this part of our region. India herself had passed through a transitional period of insularity, but we noted a new attitude, born out of disillusionment, perhaps, with the "advantages" of being aloof, but more probably as a consequence of the universalizing influence of new knowledge, of science, and the need to share this knowledge.

It was therefore gratifying for our mission to be as well received as it was. Dr. C. D. Deshmukh, Vice-Chancellor of Delhi University, wrote me a cordial letter in reply to our proposals to inform me that these were under study by a faculty committee and that he would write again as soon as he receives a report from this committee. Similarly, Vice-Chancellor Malik of the University of Calcutta, whom I was unable to visit when my party was in Calcutta on account of his illness, recently wrote to me a letter, which I am reproducing here (Appendix C), containing a number of concrete suggestions toward realizing exchange between his university and the University of the Philippines, which I consider well-taken, and should be helpful in guiding us in any of our future plans.

During my forthcoming trip to India to deliver the Azad Memorial Lectures, I intend further to explore the matter of exchange not only with the universities but also with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, which is responsible for a great deal of India's external cultural exchange programs. India is in an excellent position to intensify its relations with us in the light of her vast reservoir of trained talent. The problem of language is minimal, for English is used in her institutions of higher learning, and it is everywhere a *lingua franca* for most transactions. Indeed, we in the University of the Philippines have long enjoyed the presence and services of many of her scholars, and a few of ours have also spent some time there. Our experience in this regard is, I think, sufficient ground to step up the exchange.

On this last trip we have negotiated with only three of the many countries comprising our region. But it is not wholly inaccurate to say that these three are representative of the rest, so that it is not too optimistic to anticipate a replication of results once we get around to making contact with the others.

In the meantime, what can be done as we enlarge the bases for academic cooperation with our neighbors? The answer, I think, becomes obvious once we compare reality with dream, our existing orientations, activities, and academic offerings with our aspirations. There are discrepancies. I propose, then, to start by making use of the present opportunity to review our curricular programs and to try to reduce the imbalance which I have not only once, but many times, observed. This will not only serve notice about our intention, but also backstop the campaign abroad that we have launched.

To begin with, it will be desirable to enrich our course offerings in the humanities, the social sciences, and the arts with more abundant emphasis on the Philippines and on Asia, without of course sacrificing our traditional concern with universal knowledge. The deficiencies that have been noted should be provided for. From this, it is natural to go one step farther, to examine syllabi, reading lists, references, etc., even in general courses, or in science subjects; and where materials are available, the work of Asian scholars, writers, and artists should be made a part of such courses. I need not point out that the literature in most fields is replete with the work of Asians, work that can stand muster under any criterion. I like to think that it is only habit that prevents us from making more use of them.

Although this is only one step out of many we shall have to take, it will provide momentum to a movement. In turn, we hope to generate pressures which we shall have to meet, not all at once—for specialists are not produced overnight—but in time. As our visit has pointed the University of the Philippines confidently toward new and exciting perspectives, so will this and other courses of action symbolize our commitment to the University of the Philippines' new role in Asia.

## Appendix A

January 24, 1964

H. R. H. Krommun Naradhip Bongsprabandh  
Vice-Chancellor  
Thammasat University  
Bangkok, Thailand

My dear Prince Wan :

In accepting your gracious invitation to visit Thailand and Thammasat University, I am sure you are aware I come with the principal aim to strengthen education, intellectual, and cultural cooperation between the University of the Philippines and the Thammasat University, as well as the other universities of Thailand.

The Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines, its Executive Committee, the University Council, and I, are strongly of the opinion that there is no time more opportune than the present, to expand the dialogue, the exchange of ideas, between your people and mine, especially between the thinking few of both countries, existing albeit in fitful fashion today. This is best done, I feel, via the medium of our centers of learning.

In this I am fully aware of the lack of a basis for understanding such as may underlie exchange arrangements between your universities and mine, and of the problems relating to their establishment and their expansion. To be sure, some preliminary thought has been expanded along this line, notably by the Association of Southeast Asian Institutions of Higher Learning (ASAIHL) and by the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). Their work is still exploratory. However, since they aim at the same thing, *i.e.*, at academic collaboration among the universities of the region, their efforts can very well enjoy the support of these universities as soon as they are embodied in concrete proposals.

Since the achievement of this aim depends, in the final analysis, on the willingness of our universities to participate in a region-wide accord, much more can be accomplished if we were

to push ahead with bilateral arrangements of our own on a number of important areas, such as the one I propose to forge with the universities of Thailand, in order (1) to prove their feasibility on a limited basis, and (2) to provide the model for enlargement to regional dimensions.

The areas which I consider of paramount importance, and where early implementation is both desirable and workable, are the following:

1. An exchange of students (graduate or undergraduate) through a system of scholarships to be sponsored by the universities concerned on a reciprocal basis. In this connection, the University of the Philippines is prepared to commit, subject to approval by the Board of Regents, two to four scholarships for qualified Thai students in the fields of Asian Studies, the Social Sciences, and the Humanities. There are in addition to a number of other scholarships, now available to Asian students, those in economics and other fields;

2. An exchange of scholars, *i.e.*, of members of the faculty, who may wish to teach, undertake research or to study in a host university. For this purpose, it is necessary to arrive at an understanding that will involve the question of (a) the institutional affiliation of these scholars, for example, their acceptability, and (b) their support, materially or in terms of facilities. The University of the Philippines is again prepared to take in a limited number of Thai instructors or scientists in some of its units, *e.g.*, in the Institute of Asian Studies, where an instructor in Thai language may at the same time study Pilipino, under complete or partial support by the U.P.;

3. An exchange of library materials, which will enable a scholar at the U.P. or a Thai university, to secure the loan of original materials from another university through an inter-library loan agreement;

4. A continuing exchange of books and publications, a long overdue arrangement and one which I consider of particular urgency in order to intensify communication between our scholars;

5. The establishment of Philippine Studies in Thai universities, and of Thai Studies in the University of the Philippines. For a start, this may be implemented by arranging for an exchange of professors who shall teach the history, culture, language, and

institutions of his country. At this early date, it is perhaps preferable to begin by exchanging language instructors, in view of the fact that a serious obstacle to exchange lies in the language problem;

6. An arrangement by which continuing negotiations can be undertaken regarding the validation of credits, the equivalence of curricula or degree programs and their course contents, and accreditation of degrees;

7. A study of the feasibility and the method of execution of a cooperative or joint venture, similar to that of a University of Southeast Asia, which will bring together the Institute of Asian Studies and other regional academic programs of the University of the Philippines and their counterparts in Thai universities, and achieve thereby a more varied, and more scholastically valid teaching and research program for specialists as well as non-specialists in Asian Studies;

8. An exchange of representatives between the University of the Philippines and Thai universities for the purpose of working out details of the arrangements projected in (1) to (7). As a first step, and immediately preceding an exchange of representatives, the subject matter contained in these proposals may well be examined by a panel of university administrators, and their implications explored, particularly in relation to general university policies, limitations, and aspirations. It is hoped that out of this analysis, a report, embodying sound recommendations toward carrying out desired objectives, may be submitted and made the basis for further negotiations.

In conclusion, I should like to note that during this my visit, while it is not realistic to expect full and final accord on all points raised, it is not altogether unreasonable to hope for a tentative meeting of minds in the light of the spirit of cooperation that now prevails among the countries of this region, and I am happy to note, especially between the Philippines and Thailand.

Sincerely yours,

CARLOS P. ROMULO

## Appendix B

## JOINT STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE SJARIF THAJEB, RECTOR OF THE UNIVERSITAS INDONESIA AND GENERAL CARLOS P. ROMULO, PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

In line with the proposals submitted by General Carlos P. Romulo, President of the University of the Philippines, to the Honorable Sjarif Thajeb, Rector of the Universitas Indonesia, which were made the subject of consultations between Dr. Romulo and His Excellency, Prof. Dr. Tojib Hadiwidjaja, and the various Rectors of Universities in Indonesia, including the Rector of the University of Indonesia, the Rector of the University of Gadjad Mada, the Rector of the University of Padjadjaran and of the Institute of Technology, and the Rector of the University of Diponegoro, within the framework of the cultural agreement entered into by the government of Indonesia and the Philippines, it was unanimously agreed that the proposals were not only sound and feasible, but also timely, in view of the spirit of friendship and of cooperation that now subsist between Indonesia and the Philippines.

Secondly, it was agreed that the proposals would be made the object of intensive study by the Ministry and the various universities of Indonesia, with the end in view of their implementation as soon as possible or as soon as the appropriate machinery and pre-conditions are established. For this purpose it was further agreed that immediate steps would be taken to convene a council for academic cooperation among Maphilindo countries, now comprising Indonesia and the Philippines, which shall be composed of heads of various universities in both countries, or their duly accredited representatives with the chairman to be rotated every year among the heads of universities composing the council. It shall be the primary function of this Council to work out the bases and the programs for academic cooperation and mutual assistance, to establish policies therefor, to implement these policies by the sary, but primarily at university levels, and to supervise the imadoption of necessary measures at the ministerial level, if neceplmentation thereof. Among its early duties shall be the drawing up of a list of priorities concerning areas of needed cooperation and assistance, covering all fields of scholarly or technical interest, but emphasizing regional studies, or studies pertaining to the two countries, and allocating needed assistance or cooperative ar-

rangements among the universities comprising this agreement. The Council shall organize itself upon a future date which shall be mutually agreed upon by all parties, and thereafter may undertake its work by correspondence in the spirit of *musjawarah*, but shall meet at least once each year for major policy decisions affecting programs in the ensuing year.

Finally, it was agreed in principle to take up without further delay the points covered in Dr. Romulo's letter to the Rector of the Universitas Indonesia, and to see what can immediately be implemented prior to the establishment of the proposed Council for Academic Cooperation. The proposals shall subsequently form the first number of the agenda for the first working meeting of the Council.

This agreement has been entered into by the Universities of Indonesia and the University of the Philippines in full awareness of the fundamental and far-reaching effects it may have on the cultural affinities of these two nations and the heightening sense of identity and destiny of these two nations of Malay origin.

(Sgd.) SJARIF THAJEB  
*President*  
 Universitas Indonesia

(Sgd.) CARLOS P. ROMULO  
*President*  
 University of the Philippines

#### Appendix C

Senate House  
 Calcutta 12  
 March 7, 1964

University of Calcutta  
 Vice Chancellor  
 Dear Dr. Romulo,

I am extremely sorry that at the time when you came I had a severe tooth-ache which needed operation and we were not able to meet, specially as you had come here to promote educational, intellectual and cultural co-operation between this University and the University of the Philippines.

The ways in which these objectives can be fulfilled are by exchange of suitable professors and students and also by providing

for teaching in the history and culture of the two countries in our respective Universities.

Exchange of professors and students would promote the intellectual and cultural co-operation and would be welcomed by our students as well as teachers. The only difficulty is about foreign exchange. If, however, our teachers going to the Philippines are paid the salaries that they drew here, by the Philippines University and our students are given scholarships, so that they can maintain themselves while in your country, we on our part can pay your professors salaries at the rate payable to our professors here in Indian money and your students allowances or scholarships in Rupees, the Reserve Bank of India in that case would probably have no objection.

I do not know the rate at which the teachers are paid in the University of the Philippines. On hearing from you I shall compare the rates with our rates and take up the matter with the Government of India.

Equal number of professors coming from your side and same number going from here and the same practice adopted in the case of students should make it possible for us both to pay in our own currency; the marginal difference in salary we will not be able to pay in foreign currency, that is a handicap from which we suffer.

I would like to know the language through which teaching is done in the Philippines university. If it is English, then there will be no difficulty, but if it is any other language, there might be difficulty.

Expressing my regret again for my not being able to meet and entertain you and with kind regards,

I remain,  
Yours sincerely,  
(s) B. MALIK  
(t) (B. Malik)

Dr. Carlos P. Romulo,  
President,  
University of the Philippines,  
Quezon City, Philippines  
True copy: cvl/March 18, 1964