

LIBERTY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY: BREAD AND FREEDOM

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In my talks with Mr. Justice Douglas of the United States Supreme Court, I was very much impressed by his thesis that *freedom*—as we know it—or the democratic way of life—could be engulfed by Communism and other forms of totalitarianism unless we succeeded, within a reasonably short time, in making human liberty and economic security real to the hundreds of millions of poor people all over the world, particularly in Asia and the Middle East. His obsession is radical social reforms; and in our own particular case here in the Philippines, land and tenancy reforms. Unless we courageously undertook such reforms, he opined, we could not do much to improve the lot of our masses.

Since that conversation with Mr. Justice Douglas, I came across a condensation of a recent speech of his published in *The Nation*, a New York magazine. The points made by the learned American jurist in that speech were, indeed, challenging, and were a dramatic illumination of some of his ideas about rural development in our country. I quote a few salient paragraphs from that speech:

“There are revolutions that are sweeping the world and we in America have been in a position of trying to stop them. With all the wealth of America, with all the military strength of America, these revolutions cannot be stopped. These revolutions are revolutions against a form of political and economic organization in the countries of Asia and the Middle East that are oppressive. They are revolutions against feudalism. It is feudalism that is feeding the fires of Communism in the Middle East and Asia . . .”

And further, in a spirited vein, he said: “People are on the move. I did not fully appreciate that until I got to the Middle East and spent three summers there and saw what was happening in the villages. People are on the march.

“Who are their champions today? The underground Communist Party. Why aren’t we their champions? Why aren’t we in America standing in the villages of the Middle East and Asia and saying we are for economic justice and social justice and we are going to help you, the peasants, achieve your revolution? Not by throwing bombs, of course. Not by smuggling in guns, not by lead-

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ing armed insurrections. But through revolutions in the political sense.

"What do we do instead? *We have been supporting corrupt, reactionary regimes, putting money behind governments that are vicious governments, reactionary governments, wasting the wealth of America, trying to underwrite the status quo, trying to stabilize the situation, as our officials sometimes say.* (Underlining is mine).

"The situation cannot be stabilized with all the wealth of the world, with all the guns of the world. Things are on the move. Revolutions are in the making. The stakes are civilization. Russia is not going to move in a military way, in my opinion, until the balance of power politically swings to Russia in Asia. So I say, let us concentrate our thinking upon Asia and the Middle East.

"In many parts of the Middle East and Asia, eight out of ten babies die before they reach the age of one; and it would not take very many American technicians to move through that part of the world and to stop that, by cleaning up water supplies, by teaching vaccination, and so on.

"But if that is all that is done, if all you do is keep the babies from dying before they reach the age of one, you have done nothing but increase the number of people among whom you will have to ration the poverty . . ."

That is how Mr. Justice Douglas sizes up our problems, the problems of America in so far as America is trying to help us, and the problems of the survival of democracy against the challenge of Communism.

Meanwhile, let me offer you some of the noble thoughts of Dr. Yen. I quote from the book of Dr. Pearl S. Buck entitled: *Tell the People*:

"People are the foundation of the world. If the foundation is firm then the world will enjoy tranquility. But three-fourths of the world's people today are underhoused, underclothed, underfed, illiterate. In other words, three-fourths of the world's foundation is rotten. Now, as long as this continues to be true we have a very poor foundation upon which to build the world.

"I have visited many other countries," continued Dr. Yen, "and I am convinced that the basic needs of man are the same. It is only when we get away from basic levels, which are universal, that things become complicated. Any people in any part of the world are entitled to a minimum education, a minimum of livelihood, minimum of health and self-rule. Now I feel that the basic principles and methods that have been developed in one part of the world for solv-

ing those basic problems of illiteracy, poverty, disease and misgovernment could be applied to other parts of the world which have the same problems, with, of course, the necessary but actually slight modifications and adaptations to local conditions . . .”

“It is education through reconstruction, and reconstruction through education,” Dr. Yen characterized the gist of his program.

There in the above-quoted words are the salient thoughts of the two leaders who are behind the Mass Education program to be launched in our country. It is interesting to note that, according to some reports that have come out in our local newspapers, Mr. Quirino and his administration have warmly endorsed this movement.

Please note how Mr. Justice Douglas emphasized in unmistakable language the social and political revolutions that are sweeping the underdeveloped countries of the world, including of course the Philippines. Note further how he sneeringly referred to the attempts of powers that be, here and in America, to try to stop those revolutions by dollar grants, by guns and napalm bombs, by military missions. And note also how he criticized the MSA and Point Four programs because, in many cases, the results of these programs have been merely the further enrichment of the governing class, the smart and the scheming politicians in corrupt governments, like ours today; and, in the case of health programs, the resultant effect is merely the increase of the number of the teeming millions among whom poverty is rationed. That is a very expressive phrase: “rationing of poverty.” It means that in underdeveloped countries, cursed by crooked governments, there is nothing to ration among the people but poverty. Yes, nothing but poverty and misery and bitterness and injustice. It means that in a poor country that is governed by an incompetent administration—just like our unhappy land now—especially if the rice problem is not solved and the alarming locust infestation is not conquered, soon enough the government will have nothing to ration among the people but hunger, undernourishment and diseases.

To avert this impending catastrophe, Mr. Justice Douglas urged his own country to spearhead, support and champion the political revolution against feudalism and against vicious, reactionary, corrupt governments in order to turn the tide of Communism in Asia.

Communism is winning in Asia, because, as stated by Mr. Justice Douglas in the above-quotations, the poor, the disinherited, the underprivileged masses of this part of the globe have yet found no genuine champions except the underground Communist Party. On that score and as far as the Philippines is concerned, I must, however, affirm that there are men and women in the Philippines, who

are not communists but who certainly are also not members of the Liberal Party of Mr. Quirino, who are determined to champion the cause of the common man.

Faith in the efficacy of government and efficiency of democracy can be restored only when the masses actually see and feel tangible results in the program laid out for their welfare. Piles upon piles of blueprints without reality create despair out of hope and morbid defeatism out of energetic endeavors. Promises unfulfilled are abettors of discontent. Tangible results in bringing about sufficiency, if not abundance, of food within the reach of the people and security for their lives and property, would go a long way toward the restoration of faith in the government. Otherwise, placed in the dilemma of having to choose between *security* and *liberty* the people will choose the first and prefer *bread* to empty *freedom*. The offer to our people in the form of a sacred covenant implemented by actual effective measures should be: *liberty plus security, bread plus freedom*.

"Bread with Freedom"—that is the slogan and the cry, the irreducible and categorical imperative that we must heed, obey, carry out, accomplish, and make prevail if we are to save democracy, and defeat Communism while there is still time.

"Bread with Freedom" should be the substance and the method, the purpose and the goal of the Philippine Rural Education and Reconstruction Movement of Mr. Justice Douglas and Dr. Yen.

"Bread with Freedom" is the cry of our people. It is the demand of our masses, the millions upon millions who have nothing, no hope, no future, no relief outside of poverty and illiteracy, of disease and misgovernment, as Dr. Yen has summarized.

It is not guns, not alliances with great powers, not preparations for war, nor the spending of millions and millions of dollars to prop up bad governments, that will save us from Communism. It is "bread with freedom,"—and time is running short for us to carry out the promise, to make the slogan real. I earnestly believe that our security and democracy, our salvation as a people, will depend upon our success in providing *bread* and *freedom* for our people.