

nila, the corresponding orders to the units scattered throughout the Philippines. And at 9:30 p. m. on May 10, in a three-room school-house in a mountainous village of northern Min-

danao, Major-General Sharp performed the same last melancholy office for the forces in the Visayas and Mindanao.



The Dilemma Of The National Language

By TEODORO A. AGONCILLO

I WAS thumbing the February issue of the *Shin Seiki* when, upon seeing its first page, I ran across Director-General Aquino's article entitled, "The Kalibapi: Its Ideals and Objectives." My first impulse was to read the Tagalog version of the speech.* And here I reproduce a part of it taken at random:

Hinngi sa aking liwanagin ko sa loob nitong sulatsay na maigsi ang kung ano ang Kalibapi . . . Ang pinakapangmulang talungit nito ay paggawa . . . Hanap ng Kalibapi ang pagbuo ng isang bansa . . . isang bansang malusog kung sa katuswan, maunlad kung sa paranyaman . . . Isang katusbang ganiyan ang kalakasan ay di maaring maging ganapgawa, di sarilatag . . . isang Pilipinas na di nakatanikala at ligtas sa tubong ng mga timpigul . . . (Italics mine.)

Surprise is a modest word to describe my feeling. I had, in fact, the sense of helplessness and frustration of a man who, climbing a high precipitous cliff, found himself on the brink of collapse upon discovering that an abyss, and not an inspiringly beautiful scenery, lies beyond. For though born a Tagalog and reared in a Tagalog home, I could not quite make out what the translator of the speech meant. Either I was an idiot

mumbling something I did not understand or that the translator was an incompetent foreigner who had pieced together incoherent and utterly senseless words to mean nothing in particular.

I.

THERE ARE today several groups of *mananagalogos* who sincerely believe that they are the legitimate heirs of Pinpin, Bagongbanta and Balagtas. In consequence of this they draw up rules that not only bewilder the neophyte in linguistics but also shock the scholars. I shall mention only the most prominent among them and content myself with unweaving the threads of their theories.

The first group was headed by the late Carlos Ronquillo, quondam editorial writer of the *Taliba* and a Revolutionary figure. This group believes that (1) the diphthongs *-ia* and *-io* in foreign words, when infused into our language, must remain unchanged, as in *pilosopia* (Sp. *filosofia*), *bisio* (Sp. *vicio*); (2) the prefix *pang-* must not be changed into *pam-*; and (3) the language should adopt foreign words as necessity

[* The Tagalog translation was submitted together with the original in English by the office of the KALIBAPI.—Editor.]

[I have advisedly refrained from using the term "borrow" for the simple reason that borrowing implies returning. Inclusion, in the words of Murat H. Roberts, designates "the entrance into a language . . . of the actual words of another language." Cf. Murat H. Roberts, "The Problem of the Hybrid Language," in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1, January, 1939, pp. 23-41.

arises.

The second group, headed by Lope K. Santos, former editor and senator, believes that (1) the prefix *pang-* must be changed into *pam-* and *pan-* when the initial letters of the root-words are, respectively, the bilabials *b* and *p* and the dental: *d*, *l*, *t*, *s*, and *y*, as in *pambansa* (*pang* + *bansa*), *pampulakas* (*pang* + *pa* + *lakas*), *pandaigdig* (*pang* + *daigdig*), *panlahat* (*pang* + *lahat*), *pantuhog* (*pang* + *tuhog*), *pansalok* (*pang* + *salok*), *pangyari* (*pang* + *yari*); and (2) the invention of words—only to a slight degree—in the absence of indigenous ones.

The third group, headed by Jose N. Sevilla, a grammarian-paleographer, and Guillermo E. Tolentino, a famous sculptor, proposes (1) that foreign words should be banished from our vocabulary and in their stead invented words be substituted, as *gultmog* (velar-nasal), *haptmog* (aspirate), *saliikan* (grammar), *tahisip* (philosophy), *likdama* (concrete), *likhagap* (abstract), *tansap* (person), *siphunay* (sentence), *sali-pawpaw* (airplane), *hatinig* (telephone), *tingwirin* (radio), *pulati* (*sa pula sa puti!*—meaning, 'rose!'), and the names of the days and months; and (2) like Mr. Santos, the repudiation of the consonantal diphthongs, such as *ts* (*ch*), *tr*, *kr*, etc., meaning that such foreign words and names as Franklin, Francisco, truck and the like should be written and pronounced, respectively, *Parangkilin*, *Paransisko*, *taruk*.

The long years that have elapsed since 1908 when the *managalogs* convened in a body to solve the problem of the Tagalog language testify to the keen struggle for power and popularity among the three groups

The creation of the Institute of National Language by virtue of Commonwealth Act No. 184, and the subsequent approval of Mr. Santos' grammar as the official grammar of the national language, did not, as expected, solve the eternal problem. Mr. Sevilla wrote a grammar that is not only revolutionary but is also in colorful opposition to the official grammar. Other grammarians, and those who like to believe that they are so, frantically rushed to the press and also put out their own grammars which are opposed to the two already mentioned.

The private schools and universities soon advertised in the papers that they had included the teaching of the national language in their curricula, and that this and that authority on the language—popular poet, dramatist, writer, etc.—was on its faculty. The upshot was, of course, the mad scramble for positions. But the worst feature of it was that different universities taught the same language along diametrically opposed lines. On top of this, the periodicals refused to recognize the official grammar and Mr. Sevilla's. Even among the papers—dailies and weeklies—differences in orthography and analogy simply could not be avoided.

II.

UNDER SUCH circumstances, a writer who sends his contribution to a periodical must adapt his grammar to that of the editor, or he suffers either rejection or complete revision of the manuscript. Professors of the national language in the universities have also experienced the same degree of humiliation.¹ Thus for instance, the *Mabuhay*, whose editor was Amado V. Hernandez—perhaps the foremost journalist in Tagalog—

¹ I shall not go into a full discussion of their theories, since I have, in a measure, discussed them in my essay "Sa Dehan ng Atang Wika."

² A curious situation prevailed when the manuscript of a professor in Tagalog was sent to the *Mabuhay* or to the *Taliba* only to be totally revised by the editor, thereby making a fool of the professor, since, while disagreeing with the editor, his manuscript was made to conform with the editor's linguistic ideas.

followed the German method of combining several words to express a single idea, as in *bahaykalakal* (*bahay* + *kalakal*), *pamilihangbayan* (*pamilihan* + *g* + *bayan*), etc. While on the other hand, the *Talibu* sometimes separates the two words or joins them by means of a hyphen, thus: *bahay kalakal* or *bahay-kalakal*, *pamilihang bayan* or *pamilihang-bayan*. But the two rival periodicals were one in using *pang-* instead of *pam-* and *pan-*.

At present, the emulation is between the *Liwayway* and the *Talibu*, both of the *Manila Sinbun-sya*. The latter paper has not changed its stand on the issue, but the *Liwayway* has shifted to Mr. Santos' camp. Even so, a close examination of its pages reveals that while conforming to some of the rules laid down by the Institute of National Language, yet in more ways than one the *Liwayway* violates some of those rules, as for instance, the use of the hyphen in words like *pag-ibig*, *pag-asa* but NOT in *pagaalinalangan* which, to be consistent, should have been written *pag-aalinalangan*.*

The confusion that arises even among the adherents of the official grammar can only be understood by studying the book itself. I venture to offer a few observations regarding the matter.

First, the official grammar contains errors, inconsistencies and absurdities which up to the present time have not yet been corrected or revised. Second, the use of arbitrary, and sometimes altogether misleading, terms and nomenclature is incongruous with the general tendency of all languages, to wit, simplification. Third, the grammar, though staggering in its thickness, is nevertheless sadly wanting in methodology, more especially as that important branch of grammar called syntax is not treated well and adequately. And

lastly, many of our writers, particularly those who uphold the official grammar, confuse phonology with orthography, that is to say, they spell the words according to the pronunciation—a very serious blunder since a person with defective organs of speech inevitably becomes the standard of judgment. Moreover,—and this, too, is significant—some of the rules make for a radical change in some of the words, such as *bagongpanahon*, which is written *bagumpahanon*; *bagongbuhay* is *bagumbuhay* and others of similar import. And in observing this trend one is led to substitute the following words for the correct ones:

Original Tagalog	According to the Santos theory
panindim	panindim
tanlay	tanlay
panglaw	panlaw
sanyo	sanyo
tanlaw	tanlaw
damdam	dandam
mangyari	manyard
hanlaw	banlaw
timaim	tinaim
sangla	sanla
tantam	tantem
dingding	dinding
samsam	sansam
sangsang	sansang
singsing	sinsing
ganlay	ganlay
bulanlang	bulanlang
lamlam	lanlam
himlay	hinlay
simsim	sinsim
kimla	kinla
kamtan (kamitan)	kantan
ranya	ranyo
magandangbabai	magandambabal
bukangbibig	bukambibig
tanglad	tanlad

Note how curious the words become when the rules laid down by the Institute of National Language are observed. And yet, examine the official grammar and the publications of the Institute and one will find, to his amusement, that they violate the rules they impose on others. This explains why the official grammar appeals only to the minority.

* *Liwayway*, February 20, 1943.

IV.

AS FOR Mr. Sevilla's attempts to purify the language, I can only repeat here what I have already said about it in my essay "*Sa Dahon ng Atin Wika: I. Ang 'Salitikan . . .'*" ni G. Jose N. Sevilla." "I do not say that it is obnoxious, nor yet prohibited, to invent words, but considering that everybody can do the same and no one has the power to interfere in the exercise of his rights, one will readily see where the Tagalog language will be dragged. I fear that if all our writers follow Mr. Sevilla's nationalistic credo, Tagalog will not be the upshot but a language that is unknown and unintelligible, a language that is worse than Esperanto, Idiom Neutral, Interlingua, Nov-Esperanto, Arulo, Occidental, Ido, Ro and Volapuk. Perhaps everybody is aware that language is not made, but on the contrary, allowed to grow in accordance with its nature and character."

For language, to adopt a term from Spengler,⁵ is not a thing-become but a thing-becoming, a living organism that has the capacity for growth. The potency of any language lies in its infinite opportunities and possibilities for expansion, not only vertically but also horizontally. William Dwight Whitney, perhaps the greatest American linguistic scholar and

Sanskritist, in his *Principles of Linguistic Science*, says: "No tongue remains the same during a long period, fact on which rests the whole method of linguistic investigation. . . . It [language] cannot be changed hastily of time. This is the fundamental or capriciously, because it depends upon general consent, which can be won only for such modifications and extensions as are in accordance with its already established rules. . . . Individual authority . . . is too weak to force itself upon public opinion. . . . Language is an institution, constantly undergoing, at the hands of those who use it, adaptations to their varying circumstances and needs."

And H. L. Mencken, in speaking of the attempts to purify the English language, comments: "The standard Southern dialect of English has been arrested in its growth by its purists and grammarians, and burdened with irrational affectations by fashionable pretension. . . . Its tendency is to combat all that expansive gusto which made for its pliancy and resilience in the days of Shakespeare."⁶

To allow the operation of a strictly nationalistic creed in language is to cripple it, and, in the words of Havelock Ellis, "It can only make for ossification, for ankylosis, for petrification, all the milestones on the road to death."⁷

⁵ Oswald Spengler: *The Decline of the West*. (Two volumes in one.) New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1939.

⁶ H. L. Mencken: *The American Language*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1938, p. 93.

⁷ Havelock Ellis: *The Dance of Life* (Modern Library edition), p. 164.

"Labor A Prerequisite to Freedom And Final Liberty"—

NOR SHOULD we look at labor, especially with the hands, as an act of degradation, for indeed, work makes a man strong, noble, independent and happy. The dignity of labor which Rizal so beautifully pictured in all his writings as a prerequisite to freedom and final liberty should be regarded by all Filipinos as the guiding principle in all our endeavors as a people.

—DIRECTOR GENERAL ELMIGDO S. AQUINO of the KALIBAPI.