

■ Neglected in Philippine schools, Geography is one of the most useful studies.

GEOGRAPHY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Geography is a forgotten discipline in our school curriculum both in the elementary, high school and college levels. Older people in the Philippines have had the opportunity to take geography classes during our elementary schools. Very few indeed had the opportunity to get this in college level. The younger generations have not had this opportunity because there was what our educators called improved curriculum in the educational system. This started in the beginning of the Philippine Commonwealth government in 1935 when the nationalization of our government offices and educational institutions took place. American educators were substituted by American-educated Filipino educators. They *abolished geography* and in its place introduced several subjects under the heading of *Social Studies*. About 8 years

ago, an American geographer who passed by Manila on his way home from an International Geographic Union Congress in Tokyo commented that our Manila Times newspaper has 4 to 6 pages of Society and social news items.

You may wish to know what a geographer can do or how he can make use of his knowledge and the application of these to his daily life or activities.

The geographer can evaluate the physical and economic resources of the country and indicate reasons for its success or failure in the economic development. As a basic and foundation subject, it can be used by different specialists such as the physicist, the oceanographer, the economist, the engineer, chemist, biologist, forester, climatologist, ecologist, military strategist, politician and

our science-promotion officers.

In the routinary work of our science promotion officer and visits to areas of his jurisdiction he may come across a village at Lake Bato (if he is in Camarines Sur) and observe the people's daily activities. In this area he may notice a married woman with two or three children tagging along, one in her arms and another one expected in three or four months. With a good knowledge of geographic fundamentals, such as climate, presence or absence of electric light, protein and carbohydrate intake of the people, land form and earth resources plus a good power of observation, he can easily synthesize the facts on hand and can understand the situation prevailing in the community.

In military geography, detailed basic knowledge of geography has been responsible for a successful military and naval operation of world powers. In the words of Dr. Alden Cutshall, "Hitler's timetable of conquest moved with clock-work precision during 1939, 1940 and early

1941 when General Karl Haushofer, a trained geographer, was one of his trusted advisors. After his break with Haushofer, at the time of the German invasion of the USSR in July, 1941, German conquest was beset by reverses of varying and increasing magnitude. Allied landings in Africa and Italy were successful, at least in part, because they were timed to wait for optimum geographical conditions of tides and winds.

"General MacArthur knew in detail the geography of Tacloban and the eastern coast of Leyte. He was in charge of the topographic crew that mapped the area before World War I. This was probably his first assignment after graduation from West Point."

And now for engineering, there are geographic needs for almost every science. It is desirable for an engineer to know the sources of his materials in addition to their uses and strength. Economic geography can supply such information. There are schools of mines that require a course in world geography in Latin America so that

their graduates may have knowledge of conditions in the foreign lands where many may be employed. Courses in Sociology which emphasize labor problem may be of great help to engineers in dealing with their employees and in public relations.

Chemists and chemical engineers need to know the facts concerning the occurrence of essential materials, available transportation, labor supply, power resources, and markets in order to determine processing and fabricating plants may be located. Other geographic factors affecting plants locations may include water supply for steel mills and textile dyeing, availability of railroad or other transportation for flour mills, furniture factories and most other sorts of bulky goods, and the occurrence of needed supplies adjacent to each other.

A biologist, who specializes in ecology is applying geography in his science. Men concerned with the conservation of wildlife and fish need to know the optimum habitats for the animals, otherwise introduction of

new birds or fish species may fail for lack of the necessary environment. The effects of animals on a new environment must also be known; and an understanding of this would have prevented the introduction of the carp into the lake in Camarines Sur that destroyed the most important fish of the locality.

Biologist and agriculturist need to know the climatic regions of the world and the weather requirements affecting plants and animals. Foresters use geography in many ways. The species of trees and the rapidity of their growth is related to the temperature, rainfalls, growing season, soil, steepness of slopes, etc. The distribution of forest types is therefore a phase of geography

Physicists find many of their experiments affected by various factors among which are relative humidity and temperature, by changes of pressure resulting from cyclones and to differences in elevation, and by differences in the clarity of the atmosphere, all of which are concerned with the earth and

hence are essentially geographic phenomena.

Like meteorology, oceanography is a science which has grown from the geography soil. It is concerned with hydrosphere, a very mobil part of the earth. The tides, currents, temperature, constituents, configuration of the coast and ocean floor and the life of one ocean and its distribution are outgrowth and elaboration of simple geography.

Certain diseases appear to be related to different geographic factors. The incidence of mosquitoes, tick and other insect-borne diseases is related to the weather and vegetative conditions under which the insects thrive. Fungus infections are very prevalent in the wet tropics. When the English occupied Manila during the latter part of the 18th century, an English woman correspondent sent her description of the climate of the Philippines to her London newspaper in one sentence — "the climate of the Philippines is divided into two seasons, namely: smallpox season and cholera season." That was a beautiful medical geographic des-

cription of the wet and dry climate of the Philippines.

Mathematics is an integral part of geography. The construction of map projections, the explanation for deflection of the winds and ocean currents by the earth's rotation, the calculation of latitude and longitude, and the determination of the length of day and night and other numerous geographic laws and principles require the use of mathematics which may well be called the mother of all sciences.

Public planning is one of the recently developed sciences; it is the foundation upon which the planner builds, consisting of resources, physical features and general environmental conditions. All of these are fundamentally geographic. Geography provides the base from which planning can proceed.

A nation's power is the proportion to the resources available and the effectiveness of their utilization. Everybody in this country has been singing one kind of music — that of the Philippines having vast natural resources. But no country since the dawn of history has

been too reckless in exploiting its resources at such a rapid rate as has been done in our country. Situation report made by Dr. and Mrs. Lee M. Talbot, both geographers of note working for the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, states that the Philippines is at a crossroad of rapidly diminishing natural resources. It revealed

the glaring facts of exhaustion to the extent of extinction of these resources.

In using the geographical approach to economic development of our developing countries, we may make use of fundamental knowledge of resource geography. — *By Dominador Z. Rosell, from a paper read on Sept. 2, 1966, NS.DB.*

THEY RAPED THE PHILIPPINE FORESTS

The way the natural resources of the Philippines have been exploited after World War II by some Filipino adventurers, most of them financially supported by aliens in and outside the country, has caused the virtual destruction of the forests in practically all provinces. This careless exploitation has not only depleted our forest areas; it has also given rise to devastating floods eroding our hills, plains, and valleys. The few adventurers are now turned into millionaires, affluent politicians, and powerful landlords. They deprived the nation of a large part of its natural assets. — *Contributed.*