

- This enlightening article was written by a famous thinker, writer, and mathematician in 1939 before the last World War. It is still full of valid ideas. Under the criteria it mentions, we might ask: Can the Philippines be a democracy?

HOW TO BUILD A DEMOCRACY

Consider, at the present day, the governments of Germany and Denmark. These two countries are neighbors, closely akin in race, religion, and language — yet the one exhibits the extreme of autocracy and militarism; the other, the extreme of democracy and pacifism. This example suffices to dispose of the idea that race, in the biological sense, is any degree relevant to our problem; no one can reasonably suppose that Germans and Danes differ appreciably in their congenital constitution. It is as regards history, tradition, and opportunity that they differ. Those are the forces that mold national character, and it is through these forces that the humanization of power must be effected.

Democracy was invented as a means of preventing the arbitrary use of power, but its success, so far, has been strictly limited. It is greatest

in the small Germanic countries — Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, and Switzerland. Next in order comes the United States, but here the system has failed to secure justice for Negroes and to prevent the illegal employment of the police on the side of the rich in labor disputes. England and France are democracies at home but not in their imperial possessions. Germany and Italy have made short and precarious attempts at democracy, which the bulk of their own populations regarded as unsuccessful. Russia, Asia, and Africa have never, even temporarily, had democratic forms of government. The nations that are democratic have not always been so.

The chief conditions for the success of democracy appear to be three: first, an educated population; second, a considerable degree of cultural homogeneity; third a

greater interest in home affairs than in relations with foreign countries.

As to the first of these conditions, there is much to be said, but for the moment I shall confine myself to the obvious fact that where a majority cannot read it is impossible that there should be any widespread understanding of political issues.

Cultural homogeneity is a vague phrase, and I will try to replace it by something more precise.

What I mean exists, for example, in Switzerland, in spite of differences in race, language and religion. It is a matter of sentiment, generated partly by history as taught in schools. A Swiss is a man to whom, from earliest infancy, William Tell has been a national hero. An American is a man who reveres the Declaration of Independence. An Englishman thinks of the Armada and the Battle of Waterloo. A Frenchman is proud of the Revolution, unless he is a reactionary — in which case he gives his allegiance to Joan of Arc. But in addition to these educational myths there is another very powerful source

of homogeneity, namely similarity in national customs, manners, food, games, and so on. This similarity makes life at home more effortless than life abroad and gives rise to a feeling of safety which makes compatriots seem more virtuous than foreigners. Underlying all this is the instinctive love of home which man shares with other animals.

Where there is not cultural homogeneity in this sense, democracy, if it is to succeed at all, must be federal. A federal system is hardly possible unless the various groups are separated geographically.

Democracy is a method of adjusting internal conflicts of interest and sentiment and seems unnecessary when a nation is primarily conscious of itself as a unit in conflict with others. France in the French Revolution, Russia in the Russian Revolution, and Germany since Versailles were in this situation; and in France and Germany, if not in Russia, foreign enmity was the chief immediate cause of the suppression of democracy by dictatorships. In war the sense of solidarity is such that a leader who

personifies the nation easily persuades men to allow him dictatorial power, especially if there is a serious risk of defeat. War and the fear of war are at the present time the most serious obstacle to democracy.

It is obvious that the class war, where it exists in an acute form, makes the rule of force inevitable, not only because all war has this tendency but because class war destroys cultural homogeneity. When class war leads to dictatorship, as it has done in Russia, Italy, and Germany, it establishes the dictators as an oligarchical authority and, by arousing foreign enmity, makes them the representatives of patriotism. As a method of humanizing power, therefore, the class war, in its more violent forms, is inevitably doomed to failure.

Nevertheless, the problem of humanizing power cannot be solved unless it can be dealt with in the economic as well as in the political sphere. I do not believe that it will be solved in the economic sphere so long as the solution is represented as solely in the interest of the proletariat, because the in-

dustrial proletariat, in most countries, is a minority and in all countries is too weak to win without such bitter warfare as must lead to dictatorship and so to the creation of a new privileged class.

Given democracy, both economic and political, there will still be much to be done before power is completely humanized. There must be freedom to criticize the authorities, opportunities for removing men in power if they act illegally, a spirit of toleration as between opposing groups, and a very widespread respect for legality. This last must be sufficiently strong to deter soldiers from following a general if he invites them to overthrow the civil government. Such a state of opinion is not impossible: it has existed in England since 1688 and in America since 1776.

I conclude that the humanizing of power is possible on certain conditions. First: there must not exist, within one governmental unit, such implacable hatreds as are apt to be associated with militant differences of nationality, intolerant religious disagreements, or vio-

lent class war. Second: there must be no imminent risk of serious war; that is to say there must be a federal government of the world, possessed of the sole armed forces beyond such as are genuinely needed for police purposes. Third: economic

as well as political power must be democratic, which requires that the main sources of economic power should be controlled by the democratic state. — *Bertrand Russell, condensed from Forum and Century.*

EQUITY

Perhaps the most significant thing that came out of the selection of the eight Nacionalista senatorial candidates was the canning of the "equity of the incumbent" business.

Of course, the party moguls influenced the delegates to the national directorate meeting this way and that, but that was only natural.

The point is that the delegates were not coerced into voting for this or that candidate. They were not bought. They absorbed the pressure of influence coming from highly placed quarters in the N.P., and then in the secret balloting, they made their own choices.

Definitely, this was one affair where no one could cry "Fix!" or "I was robbed!" — *Manila Bulletin, July 31, 1967.*