

CHAPTER VIII. RECOMMENDATION: "NEW DEAL" IN MUSLIM AFFAIRS

Brief Review of Administration Problem

For centuries western administration attempted the westernization of the Muslimland whose inhabitants resisted new forces to preserve their Islamic faith and ways of life. Spain's colonial and Christianization program launched an all-out military conquest for the total assimilation, if it were possible, of the "non-Christian" Moros. The Crusade-like invasion was met with the "jihad" defense of Islamic institutions, honor and independence, and the assimilation attempt failed to materialize.

The Americans also tried to westernize and "democratize," as they thought, this same section of Philippine population which was a stranger to European institutions under the Spaniards. Fierce encounters ensued between the ".45 caliber pistol" and the "Kris of Moroland." This military approach to the problem did not end the martial spirit of the Muslims who only entrenched themselves inside fortifications against the invasion of their land. American administrators started another gimmick labelled the "policy of attraction" which brought about a condition of relative peace and order.

In the early administration of a western-oriented government over the Muslims, there were two opposing schools of thought, the military and civil authorities. The military school of thought was represented by Brigadier General Leonard Wood, who, upon his assumption of office as military governor of the defunct Moro Province, vowed he would ignore the authorities of sultans and datus

in Mindanao and Sulu.⁷⁸ Such policy explains the causes of the unhappy relations between the American and Muslim forces. The latter were offended by the foreign attempt to destroy their power over their own land and its tribal affairs.

Wood's colleague in the Legislative Council of the Moro Province, School Superintendent Najeeb M. Saleeby, was opposed to the militaristic approach of the general, hence he stood for the other and better school of thought. In his academic paper on *The Moro Problem*, Dr. Saleeby recommended that if the government had to rule over the Moros, they had to be ruled through their *datus*.⁷⁹ Although the government made no formal recognition of the authorities of indigenous leaders holding nobility titles, administrators had in fact made use of the influence of sultans and *datus* toward collaboration with the administration. Figuratively, the administration used as bridge a big branch, but *not* the whole tree for collective control. Or, one egg was taken from the nest, but *not* the whole nest bearing all the eggs.

In the present-day administration, the "Filipino First Policy" or any similar gimmick is a good rallying ideology for the class of enlightened Muslim leaders and citizens, but it is unknown to the village masses having no better understanding about the government. If the masses were better oriented with the constitutional body politic, the sound of any well-concocted ideology would have uniform meaning to the masses for their more active support and participation in the common task of nation-building.

Social Engineering

The potentialities of Muslim society and its system for community action should not be overlooked by social planners, policy-makers, and administrators. The people must also rediscover themselves. The smaller unit of the total system which has been described is seen as a real group. It is possessed of the capacity to generate more effective leadership than such new rural associations as the barrio council or a *purok* which, in the Muslim area, is often on paper, in imagination, or on pretentious signboards. The name *purok* for "group" renders similar literal meanings in Muslim dialects. The Muslims seem not to be concerned about re-grouping as they are traditionally grouped already for community action. They also seem

not to feel the need for services of a barrio council as they have their own tribal "council of datu" which only need recognition and a seminar on new functions translated into their own local logic.

The Muslim communal system and the modern associations in the rural area could be likened to two human beings on opposite sides of a glass wall. They could see each other but could not break the transparent wall in order to think and work together on matters of common welfare. The late Saleeby's recommendation of picking up the sultan or datu from the group was like drilling a little hole through the glass wall for the traditional leader to participate in the affairs of government. On the other hand, the present research recommends the removal of the entire glass wall for the possible integration of the two systems including their patterns of leadership.

If, as it is averred, the *agama* is a democratic system, then it is fertile for amalgamation, being of the same biological species as constitutional democracy. Facing the problem squarely, the current mission of the government as represented by the Commission on National Integration is, as the law provides, to integrate the Cultural Minorities into the national body politic.⁸⁰ In plain and simple terms a body politic is "a group of people organized for government," just as the Minorities are organized into their respective governments in the tribal sense. Would it not be possible to integrate the tribal traditional body politic of each Cultural Minority group into the national body politic?

For illustration, an *agama* or confederation of *agamas* could be integrated into the structure of the provincial, city, municipal, or barrio government. An "integrated agama government" could be conceived of as a small-group rural government in a Maranao sitio. Here is created an image of a grass-root "sitio government" grafted from the indigenous concept of democracy, which could be suitably subordinated to the barrio government in order to establish better coordination and support. Either, therefore, the Barrio Law, the Local Autonomy Act, or the Charter of the Commission on National Integration⁸¹ could be amended to permit the giving of status and power to tribal government.

At their own level, the tribal organizations could undertake administrative and economic self-determination and self-government and their conflict with the "modern" ways may settle into a harmonious state of accommodation. Integration, as a current concept, is

not a process of total mutilation or absolute assimilation. It is synonymous to the American concept of *acculturation* in the "new deal" for Indian affairs. It is a two-way process of cultural-borrowing of desirable traits between societies and cultures which are in contact.

The present proposal is not aimed at a total nativistic preservation of old patterns, but rather their development into becoming *de novo*. There is no divorce between the new and old lasting life. The old could create the new, and the new could revitalize the old to usefulness. A *communal* society tends, as it does, to pass into the *associational* form from both internal forces, consciously as well as unconsciously. With this in mind, it is deemed not impossible that the Muslim *communal* organizations could be consciously *associationalized* through social engineering plans.

Adjustment of Procedures and Strategies in Community Organization

The present approach toward organizing collective action relies upon motivating the new organizations or barrio councils, Parent-Teachers Associations, *puroks*, 4-H Clubs, Rural Improvement Clubs, casual fiesta committees, and other similar associations having membership of individuals from the cross-section of the community. Investigation of the concerted action of some of these organizations reveals that barrio people manifest a high degree of competence in self-government in Christian rural areas.⁸³ These associations could have similar effects in the rural Muslimlands if they could be better understood and if the conflict in leadership, interest, and values with those indigenous societies could be minimized. The efficiency of the organizing technique of "total community involvement" cannot be denied, so long as the involvement will not be more involvement of a few hand-picked individuals by the initiating community development workers or by a casual gathering of unthinking individuals who are divided by partisan politics.

Back to the sample case of the "All-Sultans Association of Marawi," it failed because of the identification of the sultan-members with the opposing political parties. The organizational approach could have been better if the moving spirits of the defunct association organized instead something like an "All-Agama Federation of Marawi." A "federation" might have the resistance against attempted

partisan politicalization. The total human membership of a federation would have the image of the older system of unity as a check against the political manipulation by the few self-centered leaders.

The "feudal concept" of government is the feature known elsewhere as the "Four States of Lanao" and their component *agama* socio-political units. With this inherent characteristic, the Muslim *communal* system can wear a modern *associational* dress, stylized to the need of modern community decision-making for the desired socio-economic change in rural Moroland. It can have a parallel meaning with the Association of Barrio Councils in Christian municipalities. "Muslim Mindanao" does not have a monopoly of this problem. Organized into tribal organizations, the whole of Philippine Cultural Minorities population could be examined for its desirable social traits to be the basis of social engineering toward integration into the constitutional body politic.

Mathematically, the barrio council plus the strength of a recognized and rejuvenated tribal organization may answer the quest for the effective social organization to promote collective action for community development