

Battle Royale in the Diliman Republic

Agoncillo Resigns

University of the Philippines
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Department of History

7 May 1966

President Carlos P. Romulo
University of the Philippines
(through the Dean, College of Arts
& Sciences)
Manila

Mr. President:

The pain of writing this letter to you is probably greater than the pain it might give you, but in the interest of the University and particularly of justice and propriety I have no alternative but to tell you with frankness and candidness what seriously ails your administration.

I specifically refer, in the first place, to the recent promotion of Mrs. Guadalupe Ganzon, a member of my staff, which was done behind my back. The University Code is clear on this point: that the initiative for appointments and promotions must come from the head or the chairman of the department. I never recommended Mrs. Ganzon for any promotion for the simple reason that between 1964, when she had her last promotion, and December, 1965, the month before she got her recent promotion, she had not done any serious or creative work, nor has she achieved anything worthwhile. This is shown by her monthly report to me (U.P. Form No. 65-A). Now, perhaps the sapient people around you, who were responsible for the so-called screening of those recommended for selective promotion, would give the lame excuse that Mrs. Ganzon has translated *La Solidaridad*. I am absolutely sure that none of these people ever saw the translation. This translation business has been going on for the last ten years or so and has been made, quite arbitrarily,

making your administration an era of excellence. But where is academic excellence in this kind of setup in which scholars, working beyond the call of duty, are not only ignored but stabbed in the back? One cannot create an atmosphere of excellence merely by talking about it. I do not know whether you are aware of the deepening crisis in the University—a crisis brought about by some people around you who excel in flattering you, in laughing with lavish silliness at your oft-repeated jokes, but are otherwise wrecking your administration by their illiterate advice tainted with selfishness. Perhaps you are unaware of this crisis because there is a *cordon sanitaire* around you, despite your disclaimer to the chairmen of the departments in one of your meetings with them a few months ago. There is a lesson to be learned in the history of past administrations, namely, that the failures of the previous presidents have been caused by the people around them, I am afraid, Mr. President, that you are not learning this lesson, which makes the observation made by the German philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel relevant: the only lesson that history teaches is that people do not learn from the lessons of history.

While everybody admits that you have vastly improved the physical surroundings of the University and have worked for the increase of the salaries of the faculty members—for which all of us thank you—yet almost everybody, except those who fawn upon you for reasons not exactly honorable, agree that far from improving the University academically you have, by uncritically accepting the importunities of the people around you, demoralized the faculty and thereby lowered the high standards of the University which, since the days of the great Don Rafael Palma, had been the serious concern of your predecessors. Some faculty members, for dubious reasons and out of season, have called you

petence, you happen to like at the moment. I agree with you. But prudence and, in your special case, diplomacy, require that that power must be wielded in the interest of justice and fair play and not on mere caprice. For to wield power unreasonably and arbitrarily is to make the wielder of power a dangerous individual. As the great British historian Lord Action said: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The least that you could have done, being a man reputed to be a world diplomat, was to consult me on the main subject of this letter, for if you or any of the people around you thought that I was being unfair to Mrs. Ganzon you could have summoned me and asked me for an explanation why I did not recommend Mrs. Ganzon for promotion. You could then have a full view of the situation and could have acted, to repeat a cliche without fear or favor. As it is, you gave your imprimatur to a patently illicit inclusion of Mrs. Ganzon's name in the list of those recommended for promotion without any knowledge of the facts. Thus, you unwittingly or unwittingly abetted the men around you not only in perpetrating an injustice but also in stabbing me in the back. We Batanguefios do not take insults lying down.

I am not the only department chairman who has been stabbed in the back by the people around you, acting through you. There are many—and they seeth with indignation. Nor is this the only time such stabbing in the back has been perpetrated in the dark. It has been going on since the inception of your administration. There are many others like me who cry in pain quietly, nursing their deeply wounded feelings with a resentment as deep as, if not deeper than, their wounds. Some day, these suppressed cries of pain will be expressed uninhibitedly, and you will reap the whirlwind that the people around you have sown without your knowl-

ed from behind in a dastardly manner. There is, today, a silent resentment among many deserving faculty members and, especially, among the department chairmen and some deans, against the actuation of your administration in granting special favors to a few lucky faculty members whose promotions have been so rapid that they have no time to pause to produce some decent works. These lucky ones sit back with the hedonistic satisfaction of a smart operator who has amassed fabulous wealth without any capital investment.

It is clear to me, as it is to the observer and the perceptive, that your administration is easily dazzled by a Ph. D. degree. Any degree does not *ipso facto* make its holder a learned and competent man or woman. In many cases, the Ph. D. honors its holders but the latter do not honor the degree. I do not mean to imply that all holders of the Ph. D. degree are frauds; there are few Ph. D.'s who honor their doctorate. What I mean is that the high degree holders must honor their degree and not make the degree honor them. In great universities, a faculty member who has not produced a scholarly work within five years after his appointment is booted out of the university. Here we honor the mediocre and the sterile with rapid promotions!

There are many other serious defects—the wags on the campus call them anomalies—of your administration. I am too sick and weary to recite them here. Perhaps a congressional investigation will reveal the festering wounds of your administration which have been smartly covered up by reams of glowing press releases.

In view of the fact that you have lost your faith and confidence in me, despite my strenuous efforts to make the Department of History respectable and respected here and abroad, and in view of the fact that I have been stabbed in the back by your administration, I regret to

and fantastic promotions. Aside from the fact that mere translation does not constitute scholarship (he does not even have any annotation to it), the translation, judging from the first number of *La Solidaridad*, published in the *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, Volume XXIII, Nos. 2-4, June-December 1958, leaves much to be desired. Moreover, Mrs. Ganzon has not really finished her translation work, as evidenced by her recent (April, 1966) monthly report submitted to me. The basis of her promotion should have been her achievement (not mere membership in high-sounding committees, which are clerical in nature) between 1964, when she was last promoted, and December 1965, the month before she received her recent fantastic promotion. My annual reports to the Dean, which contain the achievement or lack of it, of my staff, clearly show that Mrs. Ganzon has done only insignificant translations of a few numbers of *La Solidaridad* during the period. I can point to instructors and assistant professors in the University who have done infinitely superior works than the mere translation work of Mrs. Ganzon, yet they have not received the proper appreciation due them. Instead, those sterile and mediocre faculty members who have good connections with the people around you get the gravy—at the expense of those who honor the University with their sound scholarship. To paraphrase President Theodore Roosevelt, I can carve a better faculty member out of a rotten banana.

But over and above Mrs. Ganzon's lack of achievement—despite her Ph. D. and her almost twenty years in the University is the stab in my back which, to any man with a little honor left in his being, is "the most unkindest cut of all," to quote Shakespeare. I was never even consulted on her promotion, contrary to the provision of the University Code, nor was I informed about it. Even the certificate of her promotion was not coursed through me, while all the other certificates of promotion of my staff have been coursed through me. This is the second time that Mrs. Ganzon's certificate of promotion has been withheld from me. The implication is obvious: her promotion is illicit and palpably undeserved and that an element of treachery surrounds the mystery of her promotion.

You always talk quite facilely, Mr. President, about recognizing and encouraging scholarship in the University and about

the greatest president the University ever had. You believed them in the goodness of your heart and so they became your *niños* and *niñas bonitas*. Hence the fantastic, though undeserved, promotions of a few, and the slight, on the other hand, against the quiet and unassuming scholars of the University who, in the laboratories and libraries, labor through the night, in sickness and in health, to honor the University. Please do not talk to me again, Mr. President, about the length of service of the intellectually sterile faculty members, for academic excellence in all parts of the civilized world does not take length of service as an excuse for promotion. Forty years of ignorance and stupidity cannot make one a scholar.

The University, therefore, has degenerated from the greatest institution of learning in the Philippines to a glorified high school. The improved physical condition of the University is not the yardstick with which to measure the greatness of an institution of learning; it is, rather, the number of dedicated and productive scholars it has on its faculty. Socrates and Plato had no imposing buildings, no well-trimmed lawns, no carillons, but the power of their minds, their integrity, and their uncompromising attitude on questions of principles, had made any place where they met with men—even the market place in the case of Socrates—a great university. The U.P. cannot be great again if the obviously mediocre, the parrots, and the servile flatterers among the faculty rule the roost.

As a faculty member and as a person raised in the tradition of high morality and fair play, I have always stood against mental dishonesty (especially in the University), intrigues, servility, fawning and most of all, I am against such immoral conduct as the administration officials' going over the heads of the department chairmen and pushing them around as if they were paupers. On the question of going over the heads of the department chairmen, and even of the deans', let me emphasize once more, Mr. President, that the chairmen have the right to have a say in matters of appointments and promotions in their respective departments. This is provided for in the University Code. You might say that as President you have the power to promote on the spot any faculty member or employee whose face, not necessarily his or her intelligence and com-

petence. The tragic part of the whole show is that the people around you will be the first to stab you in the back the moment you step out of office, which is not far distant.

It is plain wishful thinking to believe that the victims of your administration are contented and happy in being attack-

ed. The Chairman of the Department of Chemistry can improve it if his tenure is extended. I therefore tender my resignation as Chairman of the Department of Chemistry effective May 9, 1966.

TEODORO A. AGONCILL
Chairman



Commencement
Member

LETTERS

✓ Abejo to Agoncillo //

Dear Editor:

Professor Teodoro A. Agoncillo's May 7, 1966, letter to the U.P. President, mimeographed, distributed in the U.P. campus, and published in the *Philippine Collegian*, proves dramatically, among other things, that in this University freedom of the press clearly rings.

However, to avoid misconceptions about the University and the Faculty, a few things must be clarified.

The U.P. Faculty Association defends the right of every faculty member to express his opinion no matter how erroneous, defends his right to make known to the U.P. President his disagreement with any policy or actuation, but it disowns methods, procedures or language that can only discredit and demean the academic community.

It is not our intention to justify the promotion of our colleague, Dr. Guadalupe Fores-Ganzon. The President is certainly capable of defending his actuations. He has the absolute power to promote any member of the faculty. It is believed however that productive research is not the one and only criterion for promotion. Why? Because in any university, good teachers and lecturers are just as important, if not more so from the standpoint of the students than the researchers. The researchers serve one of the objectives of a university—the advancement of the frontiers of knowledge. The teachers serve another objective—the dissemination of knowledge.

On the other hand, even as we believe that the initial position of Professor Agoncillo in this matter is untenable, we also think that the professor did his cause no service by employing means derogatory to a fellow faculty member, unedifying to the dignity of a scholar, and discourteous to the President of the institution to which he belongs.

Considering that Professor Agoncillo has virtually defamed a highly respected and hard-working colleague, Dr. Guadalupe Fores-Ganzon, and that he has used a method, a style and a procedure that reflect unfavorably on the Faculty and the University, the U.P. Faculty Association, through its Policy and Coordinating Council in its meeting on May 13, 1966, decided to disclaim publicly:

A. *The making of sweeping generalized statements from the views of two, or at most a few disappointed individuals. Such generalizations reflect sadly on a scholar's ability to discriminate and form valid conclusions.*

1. The general statement that "...almost everybody, except those who fawn upon you for reasons not exactly honorable, agree that far from improving the University academically you have, by uncritically accepting the importunities of the people around you, demoralized the faculty and thereby lowered the standards of the University..." is utterly unsupported by facts. In the light of present conditions in the University, such a conclusion could be rendered perhaps only by extremely biased individual who cannot be honored by the appellation of "researcher".

2. The conclusion that

"The University, therefore, has degenerated from the greatest institution of learning in the Philippines to a glorified high school." is embarrassingly based on a gratuitous premise (No. 1 above). It is indeed illogical even for a U.P. professor to conclude from a baseless statement.

3. To say that "We Batanguenos do not take insults lying down" marks a new low in academic and intellectual circles. It is indeed regrettable that a province is invoked to throw its weight into an academic issue such as this.

B. *A style, particularly a language, that is at best intemperate, and in instances insulting.*

1. Perusal of the letter will re-

veal this. While we may have the right to use any language, certainly in the circle of professors where the intellect is supreme and courtesy the handmaid, such language is definitely out of place, especially in a letter to the highest office of an academic institution to which one belongs.

C. *A procedure which discredits the entire academic community.*

1. It is the considered opinion of the U.P. Faculty Association through its Policy and Coordinating Council that such an official letter as was written by Professor Agoncillo should be kept within official circles and not be used to obtain sympathy by publicity. That such has been attempted to the embarrassment and virtual defamation of a peer in the faculty makes the act a cause for grief among his fellows.

2. If the aim of the letter is to embarrass, it has indeed accomplished its purpose beyond measure on this Commencement Day.

On this occasion, therefore, the U.P. Faculty Association, in order to uphold the dignity of every faculty member, and to zealously protect the honored name of the University of the Philippines, publicly proclaims its firm belief in fair play, in the employment of proper language, in the use of scholarly and scientific methods, and in the observance of decorous procedures.

The U.P. Faculty Association also takes this opportune occasion to acknowledge with gratitude the great efforts of President Romulo in upgrading the academic standards of the University, to reaffirm without reservation its conviction in the sincerity of his endeavors towards the continual improvement of every phase and aspect of the University, and to declare once again without hesitation its profoundest esteem for, and fullest confidence in, General Carlos P. Romulo, President of the University of the Philippines.

ANDRES L. ABEJO
President
UP Faculty Association



BEFORE LATIN SCHOLARS

Dr. Andres L. Abejo of the University of the Philippines addresses the World Conference of Latin Literature Professors and Scholars. The conference to which Abejo was the only Pacific area delegate, was held in the University of Rome April 14 to 18 under the auspices of the Republic of Italy. Dr. Abejo returned recently from the

30-nation conference. Among those in the audience are Rome Mayor Amerigo Petrucci, Bishop Alfons M. Stickler, Institute President Pietro Romanelli, Antonio Cardinal Bacci (the papal representative to the convention), and Msgr. Joseph Del Ton, the cardinal's assistant.

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3 senators file 4th bill on Viet aid

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ployment, massive poverty
lawlessness, indifference
and corruption," they said

"Communism precisely
thrives and flourishes on
these foul elements," the
three senators said. "We
should be strong at home
because the greater peril at
this time is from within."

Salonga said that the aid
to be extended by the Philippines
to South Vietnam should meet these crucial
tests: "(1) their pressing
needs, (2) our capabilities,
(3) their sensibilities, and
(4) our self-respect and
the respect of the world
around us."

What they need

He said that medical as-
sistance is one which would
fill the deepest need of the
South Vietnamese people.

Testifying to their "cry-
ing need" for medical aid,
Salonga said, are their
overcrowded hospitals full
of the wounded and the
suffering, the fact that out
of 900 South Vietnamese
doctors, 600 are with the
armed forces and only 30