

F O R U M

We offer the following contribution by Frank Bonilla in this section: 1) because, despite its important message, it does not fit appropriately in the *other* regular sections of LARR, and 2) because it deals positively with the problem of U.S. research in Latin America, touching upon the repercussions of Project Camelot, reactions to which have previously been allocated space here.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPING PLANNING: SOME ISSUES FOR AMERICANS*

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A recent and steadfastly optimistic study of U.S. foreign policy and democratic politics observes matter of factly that "American government frightens and bewilders its friends and its enemies alike."¹ At the moment, evidence again mounts before the world that we are not only prepared to take the lives and freedom of others on dubious provocation (as in the Dominican case) but also to seriously jeopardize institutions at home on which our own freedom rests. Along the way we have played freely with the careers and life chances of individuals with and without their knowledge or consent. In view of this, there would hardly seem to be any ground for persisting in the belief that reasonable men abroad will continue to look to us for support in rationally pursuing their own political advancement. If there is any reason for believing that we have not morally written ourselves out of a share in these tasks, it rests primarily on the realism, forbearance, and enduring optimism of men abroad who care profoundly about the quality of future political life in their own nations. Having repeatedly experienced political regressions of their own, they may view our own present difficulties with some magnanimity and a differentiating sense of the complex internal forces that have produced them. The Americans to whom these remarks are addressed are thus Americans in the large sense of men of the Americas, and particularly those who continue to hold to the hope that research based social science knowledge can prove a major resource in the achievement of useful human purposes in this part of the world. However, because given present circumstances the action of U.S. social scientists may yet have the capacity to decisively transform and revitalize the prospects for such work rather than continue to disfigure and compromise them,

* Text of a public lecture presented at Yale University on February 23, 1967.

¹ Kenneth W. Waltz, *Foreign Policy and Democratic Politics*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967, p. 304.

much of this appeal is directed to Americans in this second more restricted sense.

In the already bulky necrology on Project Camelot, it is sometimes difficult to be sure about the exact nature of the loss being lamented.² For some the problem was one of "access"—the discredit and doubt cast on U.S. academics foreshadowed a drying up of research opportunities in Latin America, imperilled and soured productive relationship of long standing, and doomed to failure fresh initiatives that genuinely sought to establish working ties between men and institutions in the United States and Latin America on a more honorable and productive basis. Others could see little more in the storm of protest than the hypersensitivity of left-leaning Latin Americans and a few U.S. scholars with temperamental affinities sharpened by long immersion in the regional culture. For many of those who saw things in this light the public death of Camelot meant only an unfortunate withdrawal of authority to execute broad scale, basic research abroad from a generous, adventurous, and powerful patron to a timid, marginally financed, civilian agency loath to act anywhere except in terms of day-to-day contingencies.

For at least some thoughtful Latin Americans, the implications were far more disheartening. Coming as it did on the heels of the Dominican intervention and as the more ugly features of the 1964 Brazilian coup began to assert themselves, the news of Camelot seemed to signal a solidification of military might behind a new vision of controlled development for the region with which few intellectuals could sympathize. At the very moment when by reason of their increasing number, experience, and training, Latin American social scientists might have expected to assume a more meaningful role in guiding policy, they were newly plunged into a defensive dispersion. A previous wave of enthusiasm for research and self-scrutiny as tools for guiding change not only cooled but was substantially reversed. Increments in rationality in planning change against powerful interests could have little payoff. Therefore, it was argued, not much is to be gained by seeking to fashion policies and ideologies on the basis of empirically verified assessments of the state of the society. Opening oneself to study or basing political goals or strategies on social realities that stronger powers are able to ignore or distort to their desired image is indeed an empty enterprise. Tragically, it was being proven to be not only an empty enterprise but occasionally a suicidal one, as U.S. policy-makers felt free to decide that democratic friends not strong enough to guarantee unchallengeable control over occasional communist allies were themselves candidates for liquidation.

The present state and mood of the social science community in Latin

² Project Camelot, a Defense Department sponsored, multi-country study of civil insurgency and its control was terminated in mid-1965 after protests by the State Department and the Chilean parliament.

America is thus one of gloom, disorganization, and dispersal. The successive shocks and crises of confidence to which its members have been exposed at home and in every aspect of their relationship with U.S. scholars and institutions would be in themselves enough to embitter any but the most resilient, generous, or cynical spirits. It will not, for example, come as a great surprise to the politically sophisticated in Latin America that ostensibly private U.S. organizations—academic, business, student, labor, religious, and charitable—have had substantial covert U.S. government support in much of their activity within the region. Two decades of Cold War contention have schooled them to perceive and even to tolerate the fact that these preoccupations color even the most trivial U.S. undertaking among them. But by now, one would guess, Latin Americans must be thoroughly exhausted and morally revolted by the speculation as to who among their U.S. colleagues may be the spies and dissemblers. They may also be feeling some unsettling presentiments about the problem of deciding who among their own ranks may have succumbed or have been made tools in some way while knowingly or unwittingly enjoying U.S. largesse. This profound distrust, self-doubt, sense of betrayal and of prevailing irrationality constitute the psychological context within which present efforts to recoup, regroup, and turn to useful purpose the social science resources of the region are taking place. U.S. scholars cannot honestly seek a role in that task without seriously reexamining their motives, competence, and commitments in the light of the disfiguring experience of the past.

An obvious primary clarification has to be made of the relationship between the U.S. scholar, the university that shelters him, and government. A comment by a Venezuelan colleague drives straight to the heart of the issue:

Very often the U.S. scientist does not understand the permanent conflict that exists between the government and universities. This is perhaps explained because his experience is one of permanent collaboration and support for his government and political system. The problem provokes conflict because in many Latin American countries the government is at odds with intellectuals and those governments are being actively supported by the United States. The U.S. scientist is trapped in this cross-fire. By and large his uncritical loyalty to his government prevails (the North American has trouble distinguishing between government and nation, a distinction that is of great importance to Latin Americans).

This means that the academic social scientist abroad must differentiate himself clearly from government, particularly to the extent that he proposes to delve, as he almost inevitably must, into issues in which the U.S. presence and U.S. policy are an integral part of the problem. This does not imply that all who work in foreign areas must become expatriates, renounce and attack U.S.

policy to curry favor with locals, or disconnect themselves altogether from government. But if some agencies within government itself deliberately take steps to shield themselves from the day to day byplay of diplomacy and Cold War tactics, it is surely not treasonable to suggest that academics venturing abroad in the name of science do so uncompromised by contractual obligations that do violence to the academic principles under which they seek and obtain collaboration.

Such statements are often taken as no more than pious if not malicious exhortations, wholly detached from any sense of reality or responsiveness to the genuine needs for research guidance of U.S. agencies with vital missions abroad. To extricate the universities and the academic from government, the argument runs, is no longer possible and would constitute a grave disservice to the nation. No sane or enforceable guidelines can be devised to bring the multifarious existing relationships between universities, professors, and agencies of government under such a simple-minded canon of propriety. At the very least a concerted drive in this direction, one is warned, would deprive the government of the counsel of the most capable and deny scholars the means for work on the frontiers of knowledge. It would also drive such research even further underground and turn it over to in-house staffs of dubious competence and even less public accountability and inclination to share results. As shall be seen, the logic of developments in research techniques themselves, the growing research capacity abroad, and the nature of the problems social and political research is now attacking make the maintenance of such constraints on the flow of research information not only less desirable than ever but probably impracticable.

Many problems that a decade ago appeared intractable have been righting themselves in a natural way as the corps of competent social scientists in the area has expanded. The technical capacity for effective independent work and international collaborative effort is present in all major countries. But as things now stand, many honest and talented Latin American social scientists do not themselves have "access" and are not therefore in a position to give it to their U.S. colleagues even if they were so inclined. Research operations remain hedged about with many restrictions, some of them self-imposed by cautious scholars reluctant to probe sensitive issues at home. Even now, the limited vision or ingenuousness of the U.S. visitor is too often matched by the lack of insight into local problems and the weak mastery of the craft by local intellectuals whose credentials remain largely canonical. The substantial validity of charges of cultural imperialism notwithstanding, it is the research that is locally initiated without outside collaboration that tends to be most restricted in scope and slavishly imitative of outside models. But present low levels of productivity represent much more political constraints on intellectual activity common to periods of military ascendancy in the region rather than real deficiencies of manpower.

Mature scholars from a half dozen countries roam the universities of the world and the corridors of international agencies, working on their countries from a distance, while at home droves of ever more youthful and now highly suspect U.S. doctoral candidates solemnly offer unsolicited advice on the reorganization of every aspect of national life.

Plainly then while the professional basis of fruitful cross-national work among U.S. and Latin American social scientists was painfully being laid, the political difficulties have been aggravated. After World War II the U.S. government's gradual appropriation of the world of science and advanced technology went largely unchallenged, and it was easy to lapse, as Professor Deutsch has pointed out, into talking of the nation's scientific manpower as an element of national security in which was embodied the nation's chances for survival. Today an institution like MIT, that has weathered a deep involvement in the most secret of government work announces with some relief that as regards the intrusion of classified work into its academic instruction and research, and I quote, "the Institute has done a good job of disengaging as world tensions have decreased." Unfortunately, it is only one aspect of world tensions that have relaxed, and the pressures to define another professional sector as vital to the question of national security has now turned on social science. What is distressing about this turn of events is that the risks to the university and the social science profession of accepting such a self-definition and involvement seem to be even graver than in the case of the natural sciences. Nothing so terrible as the capacity to blow up the planet is likely to emerge, but the dangers to the basic organizational principles of our own political life and to the political systems taking shape under our anxious vigilance are only too evident. We are not dealing in Latin America with deadly enemies but with people who despite repeated disappointments and setbacks continue to model their future in important ways on a vision of society they still identify with us. The social cost of their development hinges very much on U.S. generosity, restraint, and sanity. Castro or no Castro, Cold War models are inappropriate and destructive for the task at hand. The direct transfer of techniques and personnel from that operation to the present job of fortifying the institutional and value base of political systems in the region has been disastrous.

If despite all that has been said one happens to agree that ". . . the contemporary expression of reason in politics today is applied social science,"³ where does one go from here? Can meaningful work of this kind be in fact carried out internationally? Can it be rationalized? Can U.S. scholars make a place for themselves within it that is not merely tangential, supportive from a distance, or intrusive? I believe that the answer to all these questions can be a tentative

³ Irving L. Horowitz, "The Life and Death of Project Camelot," *Transaction*, Nov.-Dec., 1965, Vol. 3, No. 1, page 47.

“yes” though this affirmative has some elaborate and problematical conditions attached to it. These conditions are in part technical (having to do with the capacity of social scientists to produce anything of interest to policy-makers) and in part institutional and political (that is, having to do with major decisions about how the gathering and use of such information and the power that goes with it is to be organized and controlled). The two are, of course, linked, but it is worth noting that it is the second set of considerations that now seems to present the greatest obstacles. I will refer first to the technical aspects because fresh possibilities in this regard open up new perspectives and demands concerning the organization of policy-oriented research and its use.

The traditional complaint of policy-makers with regard to research touching on development has been that all such studies deal with too few variables, focus on change processes that occur over too long a time span, and tend to highlight complex variables that are beyond the manipulative reach of the practicing social reformer. Linked to this was a more fundamental complaint that such research, if it had any scope in the number of cases covered or the amplitude of observations over each case, simply took too long to analyze and generally wound up dealing respectably with only a small fragment of the total information obtained. As it has in many other fields, the computer now promises to break these critical limitations in social research. Though multivariate analysis still presents formidable practical and theoretical difficulties, the size of the data base as well as the variety and mix of variables that can be simultaneously worked with have jumped significantly. Simulation and other techniques for experimentation with large data bases provide approaches to refining prediction and testing the consequences of alternative and complex formulations of social processes and change in individuals. The number of approaches to identifying meaningful clusters or sub-systems of variables and for tracing the inter-connections within such sets is growing within every discipline, from biology to architectural design. Analysis will become more and not less intellectually demanding, but the long lonely bouts with data in efforts to analyze “whole” surveys should before long give way to a periodic posing of specific questions of immediate concern in which numerous surveys or a variety of data sources may be consulted simultaneously. Since such queries can now be put directly to computers from remote access consoles by persons like myself with minimal knowledge of the technical aspects of computer languages and operations, the confrontation with data can readily take place in a setting that includes not only the machine and analyst in interaction but also the policy-maker and concerned members of the public. The institutional implications of all of these changes are profound. They imply for one thing a widespread sharing of data that requires a reexamination of conventionally accepted notions of proprietary rights over information by scholars and sponsors of research and a reasonable expectation

that the general public will demand and be in a position to make effective use of access to such information. They imply as well new and closer relationships among researchers, responsible decision-makers, and interested publics. For the researcher the new opportunities mean greater concern about his independence of judgment, for the public more participation, for the policy maker a genuine commitment to reasoned approaches to social problems. At the very least the new circumstances would seem to call for a suspension of the fantasy that brilliant solutions will emerge from bold strokes of policy planned in secrecy and ruthlessly executed.⁴ Technically, none of these steps are merely remote prospects for the future. All exist now in operative prototypes functioning with promising efficiency.

Can we really think of useful things to put into such an information system and do we have sufficient grasp of its potential to pose questions to it that enlarge our understanding of how societies change and help reduce the human cost of such transformations? Who is to have the major responsibility for the creation and maintenance of such storehouses of data on the state of developing societies? The answer to the first question will have to stand here as a highly elliptical description of the way in which along with colleagues in Venezuela and MIT, I have tried to organize such a basic data frame. What we have sought to get into the system is a sufficiently global and differentiated image of key political actors (groups and individuals): a descriptive array of their subjective perceptions of the state of the society and their own place in it, cues as to the organizing values and psychological states behind those perceptions, and finally some sense of the political capacity of each actor or set of actors. In short, our aim has been to match a subjective picture of policy needs with independently derived diagnoses of national requirements, and to match theoretically derived policy solutions with empirical approximations of their political feasibility. As regards the second and far more important question of the institutional locus of such work, countries that we regard as far less developed politically than our own have been far less complacent than we about seeing such a function absorbed by government and a small circle of academic acolytes.

It was in fact the tension between government and university in Latin America, the need to create and validate the usefulness of a new institution having the technical capacity as well as the normative and political independence to render objective judgments on major national issues, that opened the way to MIT's participation in the research referred to a moment ago. MIT's presence was a symbolic guarantee of the technical level and objectivity of an unprecedented research venture at a moment when a new institution, the Center for Development Studies of the Central University of Venezuela, had yet to prove

⁴ Kenneth W. Waltz, *op. cit.*, p. 298 ff.

itself. But U.S. universities and academics can perform such a function only as long as their own independence and objectivity is not suspect. The matter has some importance because the problem of institutionalizing the handling of such sensitive areas of self-knowledge is largely accomplished for nations as for persons by neutralizing the subject matter or the main participation in a variety of ways. This may be seen as a major step on the path to maturity for collectivities as well as individuals.

Putting the issue in this rather abstract way serves to pinpoint the range of relevant considerations, especially as concerns the participation of outsiders. There are many ways in which work of this kind might have been organized. The Venezuelan government has ample resources and precedent for engaging foreign or domestic professional help for such activity on a contract basis. Numerous international organizations might have provided an umbrella for such activity. But the choice was consciously and wisely made to use the research as a vehicle for establishing a wholly new range of contexts, skills, and opportunities for self-study, information gathering and decision-making in Venezuela. The idea was not to produce one more government study, but to engage the will and attention of broad sectors in the nation in an important new effort of self-understanding and normative self-steering. The participating U.S. group was viewed as reinforcing the competence, neutrality, and independence of those entrusted with the main task of data-gathering and processing. Three features of this arrangement are of particular interest here: 1) the Venezuelan government, which made a very substantial contribution to the research, defined its own operations and the person of its highest officials as within the purview of the study, 2) the government contribution *bought* nothing, in the sense that the government retained no control over the design or execution of the research plan and imposed no demands in terms of specific information or reports from the study, 3) an explicit component of the research was the commitment to disseminate study results as broadly as possible and with minimal analysis as soon as they were available.

Embodied in these particular characteristics of the Venezuelan work are the main elements of what I would regard as a workable framework for an official U.S. policy and a set of guidelines for academicians and universities with respect to research activities in Latin America. Present resentments and anxieties about invasions of sovereignty and veiled efforts at managing the internal politics of other countries through research will not be dispelled by any amount of screening of projects or efforts to locate responsibility for their execution in one or another agency of government. Such fears will be dissipated only as real changes occur in the approach to such work. The guidelines I would suggest are quite simple. The first of these would be to stop trying to merely "observe" Latin Americans or persuade Latin Americans to study themselves but to seek to join

them in examining problems of mutual concern in which our own presence and behavior is taken as part of the problem and not as an unquestioned given. This does not mean merely inviting foreign scholars to come to the U.S. to do research parallel to studies we would like to carry out in their countries. The second is to see research findings as a generalized resource that should be made widely available as quickly as possible. It is secrecy and the guarded or unequal distribution of such information that transforms it into a weapon, real or imagined, rather than a positive force promoting rational self-understanding and mutual adjustments. Finally, the research should be carried out in such a way that a positive gain is registered locally in the individual and institutional capacity to perform and utilize this kind of work.

If these suggestions seem radical or utopian at the present time, this merely demonstrates how far we have strayed from well established canons of practicality and respect for others. These are after all only reiterations of fundamental ideas of the university, a social invention that is several centuries old. They imply that in matters that strike at the heart of what is most essential to the life of a people, certain safeguards be provided for the process of self-assessment and of weighing alternative futures. This has meant creating protected institutions in which:

1. Money given promotes an activity and not a specific piece of work.
2. Money given buys no rights over the product of that activity.
3. A high priority is given to the broad dissemination of the products of institutional activity to others than the principal patrons.

I believe we have lost sight of the significance of some of these ideas because our universities have as institutions fallen complacently into a philosophy of public service that is in part idealistic and in part a simple abdication of responsibility. I further believe that not very much that is genuinely useful or truly supportive of political development can be found out about a society outside of a framework reasonably close to that which has been outlined here. The U.S. university can find an honorable and fruitful place in such work in other nations to the extent that it can certify its own autonomy and capacity for self-management. The U.S. government will find acceptance for its desire to share in or support such efforts to the extent it does so in ways that manifest a willingness to open itself to a shared experience of self-scrutiny and rational accommodation.