

# ***EROPA: ENLIGHTENED COOPERATION OR ORGANIZATIONAL PROLIFERATION***

by

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The proliferation of organizations is a phenomenon of what we like to call modern times. Organizations have existed, of course, since the dawn of life. But their great proliferation is a product of the present century, and especially of recent decades, and peculiar to life in the industrial states. Which is to say that organization is an inevitable concomitant of industrialization. To industrialize is to organize. And whereas industrialization satisfies wants and solves problems, it likewise generates new wants and new problems which, in turn, give rise to new organizations.

## **The Need to Organize**

Compare, for example, the organizational needs and desires of industrial man with those of his pre-industrial counterpart. The complexity of industrial life requires organized activity much more involved and specialized than that which prevails in non-industrial societies. The peasant farmer is relatively self-subsistent. He grows his own food, makes his own clothes, builds his own house, educates his own children, and distills his own whiskey. He is by tradition self-reliant and self-centered. His universe is his village. His need for organization is small. Industrial man, on the other hand, lives in a complex, dependent world. He depends upon organization for such necessities of industrial life as food, water, heat, electricity, housing, police and fire protection, and garbage and sewage disposal. Moreover, he is a specialist whose well-being is inextricably meshed with the well-being of countless other specialists, with the state of domestic and world markets, with technological change, with conditions of peace or war, and depression and inflation. In short, his job, his security, even his health and happiness are collective. His problems are community problems, national problems, even world problems. He has to organize to solve them.

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And organize he does--sometimes rationally, sometimes irrationally. The point is he recognizes and accepts the need for collective action. He is resigned to, if he does not always relish, his interdependent status. Pre-industrial man, on the other hand, is just becoming aware of the advantages of cooperative action involving persons or situations beyond his immediate environment. Living in comparative isolation for centuries, his needs and his expectations remained relatively constant over time. He tends, thus, to be deeply suspicious of outside interference, of social, economic, and technological change. At the same time he is increasingly conscious of his apparent lack of material well-being. But he has yet to accept the fact that to realize his increasing needs and rising expectations he has to organize. He has to accept the harsh truth that his destiny is inseparable from the destinies of countless other pre-industrial and industrial men. This change takes time.

Nations are not substantially unlike individuals in their need for organization. The technologically advanced states have long since accepted the need for national planning and national organization. Even in the less economically advanced states the need is now well accepted. Moreover, the relatively recent but increasing rapid growth in the number and comprehensiveness of international organization is likewise an expression of need: A realization on the part of people and governments that national problems may be soluble only through international organization. An implicit admission that national well-being is ultimately not separable from regional and world well-being.

The United Nations, of course, is the premier example of this admission. So, too, on a regional basis, is the European Common Market—in many respects an even more spectacular example. The recently formed ASA (Thailand, Malaya and the Philippines) is still another example, as, on a smaller scale, is the Eastern Regional Organization for Public Administration (EROPA).

#### **Organization No Guarantee of Usefulness**

It should go without saying that the mere existence of an organization is no indication of its usefulness. The first stipulation of organization is a problem. Someone (some government)

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wants to solve a problem or accomplish something he (it) cannot accomplish alone. The desired goal may be the maintenance of world peace, regional economic integration, the stabilization of world commodity prices, or any of the whole host of human needs and wants. Whatever the basis for organization, there is no guarantee that its formation will, or can, attain the desired goal. Not infrequently a desired organizational goal is not clear, is poorly conceived, or is visionary. Moreover, human beings often evince a remarkable capacity to support causes (organizations) in which they have no personal or economic interest and which appear to be practically hopeless of success.<sup>1</sup> They also are occasionally given to forming organizations as a means of evading personal responsibility, or simply because it "seems like the thing to do." One wonders how many organizations could produce *on demand* an explicit, precise statement of goals. How many have lost sight of their intended reason for being? How many have distorted or abandoned their intended goals?

There is, of course, no way of knowing the answers to these questions. They (or similar ones) are, nevertheless, the most important kind to ask of any organization. A corollary of Parkinson's Law "that work expands so as to fill the time required for its completion" might be "that organizations are easily conceived, readily born, but seldom die." Imagine, if you will, that every organization was required to satisfactorily (precisely) answer the question of goals, or lose its identity. Who knows what the savings in time, resources, and energy might be. And for those that survived, the exercise would surely have been a profitable one. How better can an organization take stock of itself—focus on problems, sharpen programs, eliminate unnecessary activities, measure results—than by periodically restating and re-examining its goals?

#### **EROPA Goals, Assumptions, and Problems**

Since this *Journal* issue commemorates the holding of the Second Session of the General Assembly of EROPA, it is perhaps not inappropriate, to conclude with an examination of EROPA

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<sup>1</sup> Simon, Smithburg, and Thompson. *Public Administration* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), p. 34. Examples of this sort of behavior are the movement to establish Esperanto as an international language and the thirteen-month calendar movement.

goals and problems. The reader will understand that the undertaking is necessarily preliminary and suggestive. A full-scale examination of EROPA goals, programs, and problems is a job for EROPA members.

"In order to advance the economic and social development of the Region through the promotion of the study, practice and status of public administration and adoption of adequate administrative systems, the First Regional Conference on Public Administration decided . . . to set up a permanent regional organization." These words are from the Preamble to the *Constitution* of EROPA. They contain at least three fundamental assumptions.

*Assumption One: that public administration is directly related to economic and social development; that improved public administration is a means to better economic and social conditions.*

That both parts of this assumption are true is obvious. The organization and administration of public programs is no longer, if it ever was, an undertaking that can be entrusted to just *any* person of intelligence. With government engaged in an ever growing number of jobs and absorbing an ever larger proportion of national income, there is an ever increasing urgency that public functions be performed in an efficient and effective manner. While it may be true that managing is an art (not a science), like medicine and engineering it can be improved by reliance on sound underlying generalizations, and through the systematic study of human behavior.

*Assumption Two: that the administrative systems and problems of the Eastern Region are sufficiently similar to warrant joint action and discussion.*

This assumption is neither true nor false on its face. To be sure, it has a logical ring to it. And it may be so. But its complete acceptance without examination is not justified. It tends to ignore, or at least unduly subordinate, the role of history and culture on administrative systems, practices, and behavior. (The study of administration is not yet a science of universal truths and laws). The nations of the Eastern Region do not have identical histories, traditions, and value systems. Their strengths and weaknesses are not the same. Nor are their political systems. Moreover, they are in various stages of economic and social development—from pre-industrial Laos

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to heavily industrial Japan. What may be "proper administrative practice" in one country may not be so in another.

*Assumption Three: that the term "Eastern Region" implies (describes) something more than a geographical entity.*

This assumption (related to the previous one) has to do with the question of regional homogeneity. Presumably the limitation of membership to countries of the Eastern Region has a rationale other than mere geography. Is the region, in fact, something more than a geographical term? Is it a community of nations, with common problems, common interests, common aspirations? What is that rationale? Will it withstand close scrutiny? Is it acknowledged by the nations of the region? These questions give rise to others, but one stands out--the question of membership.

Every new organization is confronted with problems that require time and patience to solve. Not the least of EROPA's is the problem of membership. Give or take a few (depending upon scope and definition) the Eastern Region contains twenty states. Yet EROPA has but six state members, and not the most populous ones at that.<sup>2</sup> This is not the place to speculate as to the reasons for the apparent reluctance of important regional states to join. Suffice it to say that EROPA can hardly hope to achieve its full potential, nor, for that matter, to develop into a truly regional organization, without the active support (including financial) of at least a majority of the states in the region.

### **The Future of EROPA**

The chief threat to the effectiveness of any organization is its failure to define and comprehend its goals and its inability to persuade its members to accept responsibility for those goals. This is a serious threat for EROPA. It needs to be faced. We do ourselves and our hopes little good by building up expectations which we cannot satisfy, or ignoring problems which are difficult and troublesome.

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<sup>2</sup> Australia, Republic of China, Japan, Philippines, Thailand, and the Republic of Vietnam are state members. Group and individual membership is also provided for. The Indian Institute of Public Administration and the Indonesian Institute of National Administration are group members.

No one can predict what the future of EROPA will be. Its potential for solid achievement in the field of public administration is undoubtedly large. Its initial organizational accomplishments are impressive. So, too, is its leadership. And it is founded on the realization that cooperative action—the pooling of time, work, and brains—is the path to progress. But a good start is only one part of the race. What follows the start is what counts. What follows in the years immediately ahead will determine whether EROPA is just one more organization in the proliferation of organizations, or whether it is the hoped for example of enlightened cooperation.

The time to set the pattern for the future is now. EROPA needs to define its goals more clearly than they are now defined. It needs to commit its membership to those goals more firmly than they are now committed. Only then will the problems which threaten to limit EROPA's potential and deny it true regional ranking be clear and resolvable.

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#### Government

Themistocles said, "The Athenians govern the Greeks; I govern the Athenians; you, my wife, govern me; your son governs you."

*Plutarch*

Themistocles กล่าวว่า "ชาวเอเธนส์ปกครองประชาชนชาวกรีก, ฉันปกครองชาวเอเธนส์, เธอ, แม่ขอดภรรยาของฉัน ปกครองฉัน, ลูกของเธอปกครองเธอ"

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