

## FORUM

An article by Hernán Godoy Urzúa, entitled "El Estado de la Comunicación en Ciencias Sociales en América Latina," appeared in the April-June 1968 issue of *América Latina*. It is concerned with a subject of great importance in Latin America. With the interest of LARR readers in mind, we include a summary of the article.

### SOCIAL SCIENCE COMMUNICATION IN LATIN AMERICA

The advancement of the social sciences in Latin America demands an elaborate system of communication and cooperation to aid specialists in their response to the challenge of rapid social change in the area. The means of communication—specialized journals, published books, personal and professional bonds between scholars, professional and scientific societies, meetings of specialists, interchanges and visits of Latin American professors and researchers, and cooperative research projects—are considered, with attention given to problem areas and achievements of recent years. Comparison, based on the means of communication, is then made between specific disciplines of the social sciences. The author outlines the relative degrees of attachment of each discipline to universities, research institutions, or regional organisms, and points to the amount of professionalization within the various disciplines. The differences in intensity of communication are mentioned, along with the difficulties faced by individual specialists. It is observed that the disciplines most recently developed in Latin America, and not the older, traditional fields, have obtained the highest levels of frequency and intensity of communication. The variable factors which have influence on the levels of scientific communication in a discipline need delineation, and to this purpose the author next addresses himself.

Hypotheses concerning essential variables may be formulated to explain the differences in levels of communication and to establish a connection among the means of communication. Among the more important hypotheses presented by Mr. Godoy are the following:

1. The degree of communication attained by a discipline or by an individual is linked to the level of scientific formation; i.e., the greater the specialization, the greater the intensity of communication. A basis of professionalization is demanded for communication. In Latin America, however, there persists an absence of uniform evaluation of specialization within disciplines, and persons in the various fields who have not obtained university training work alongside others who have attained a high level of specialization and can support a systematic form of communication.

2. Communication is correlated with the task of intellectual or scientific creation, in such a way that the greater degree of investigation and research, whether disciplinary or individual, the greater degree of communication will exist. This hypothesis is based on the fact that researchers tend to maintain more communication with their fellow specialists than with university-affiliated persons who are dedicated solely to teaching. Moreover, those disciplines in which research predominates (anthropology, archaeology, linguistics) will have a higher degree of communication than those disciplines which emphasize the teaching portion (literature, philosophy, history).

3. The degree of communication varies with the level and function of administrative hierarchies in the universities. Difficulties in communication become greater with a descent in the hierarchy, from rectors, deans, and institute directors, to researchers and teachers. Tied to the power structure of the universities, communication sometimes serves as a reinforcement of that power which is used as an obstacle to the diffusion of information to subordinate levels in the hierarchy.

4. Communication is linked to contact with foreign specialists and institutions. Latin American specialists who have studied in other countries tend to maintain a greater degree of scientific communication with those countries and within their own region. In general, the presence of foreign professors and researchers tends to contribute positively to the level of communication.

The variables which affect the level of communication are linked to other factors as well. Barriers are imposed by the university structure, through perpetuation of a system which requires that professors operate on a part-time teaching and research basis and which continues the traditional emphasis on professional training. The factor of individual psychology also presents barriers to communication. The author points out the feeling of amateurism which persists in Latin American social sciences, having an inhibitory effect on contact among Latin American scholars, on the publication of works which might be considered to fall below international standards, and on development of methodology.

What is needed, then, is an organized system which will provide not only the means but the motivation for scientific communication. A proliferation of the means of communication is not sufficiently effective, in the face of imposing university and psychological factors and, particularly, with the lack of institutionalization of communication in the region. The existence of 455 social science institutions and societies in the region, with varying degrees of activity and value, bespeaks a disorganized or nonexistent system of communication. Individual specialists face problems posed by the difficulty of obtaining foreign

journals and publications, of overcoming economic and administrative barriers, and of maintaining personal contact with fellow researchers. The necessity of organizing and institutionalizing communication on a Latin American basis is obvious. This necessity may be satisfied by the creation in 1967 of the Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales.

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