

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

Aquino Alternative, edited by Rajaretnam

Review Author: Robert Youngblood

Philippine Studies vol. 36, no. 1 (1988) 120–121

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

THE AQUINO ALTERNATIVE. Edited by M. Rajaretnam. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1986. viii, 158 pages.

Without a doubt the preservation and spread of democracy received a boost from the events which resulted in the political exile of Ferdinand E. Marcos in February 1986 and the elevation of Corazon Aquino to the presidency of the Republic of the Philippines. Although much has already been written about the "EDSA revolution," the *Aquino Alternative*, which is the result of a seminar entitled "Trends in the Philippines III" held on 7 June 1986, is important both because of the distinguished reputations of the participants and because of the timeliness and high quality of most of the papers. Among the Filipino participants were : Francisco Nemenzo, Jose Ma. Sison, Joaquin Bernas, and Luis Villafuerte.

The first two chapters by Rajaretnam and Nemenzo, respectively, provide excellent summaries of the current political crisis. Rajaretnam's chapter examines the groups most active in shaping politics in the immediate aftermath of Marcos' departure; outlines the major political and economic problems facing President Aquino; discusses the nature and extent of factionalism in the government and the military; and addresses the salience of the United States—both in terms of U.S. strategic interests and influence in the Philippines—to the Aquino administration. Nemenzo's chapter, though closely related to Rajaretnam's, focuses on the events surrounding the February revolution. Particularly useful are his analyses of the positions of various groups, especially those on the left, toward the Aquino candidacy and the extent and nature of factionalism in the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Nemenzo also examines the roles of the U.S., the Roman Catholic Church, and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in the election. He concludes the chapter with a section on the "Problems and Prospects" of the Aquino administration.

Jose Sison, the founder and former chairman of the CPP, who spent more than eight years in jail under Marcos, maintains that the pledge in 1984 by Mrs. Aquino (and other opposition leaders) to legalize the CPP is unrealistic if the price is the dismantling of the party's military arm, the New People's Army (NPA). While more flexible with respect to the possibility of a negotiated ceasefire between the NPA and the AFP, Sison argues that best prospects for a "lasting ceasefire" lie "with the formation of a coalition government" (p. 63) that includes the CPP. Under such a coalition he envisions the integration of the NPA into the AFP. Sison's analysis is premised on a belief that the semicolonial and semifeudal socioeconomic and political system of the Philippines is in rapid disintegration and that the revolutionary forces led by the CPP are growing significantly in size and strength. Although Sison avers that the CPP and its affiliates will support the Aquino government against "anti-national and anti-democratic" elements if the government continues to cooperate with "all patriotic and progressive

forces," (p. 62) he avoids any analysis of the party's miscalculation of Aquino's popularity and the desire to return to democracy as indicated by the outcome of the snap presidential election.

Although Nemenzo touches on the role of the church briefly, Joaquin Bernas provides an excellent summary of the genesis and morphology of church-state conflict during the final years of the Marcos regime. The roots of the conflict originated in documents of Vatican II and subsequent papal encyclicals that expressed the church's preferential option for the poor. Implementation of church programs for the poor that stressed social action and social justice increasingly resulted in conflict with the government and military. Bernas cites statements from the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines to underscore the church's campaign against injustice, which resulted in clashes with the Marcos regime, and he ably defends the church's role as basically moral and religious, not political.

The chapters by Jose Almonte on the military, by Arturo Tolentino on the "new" opposition, and by Luis Villafuerte on the economy are less informative in terms of the February revolution or of the immediate political future. General Almonte discusses various styles of military leadership in Philippine history and concludes that the new emerging model is "spiritually-oriented" and that the social character of the new AFP is "God-centered and people-oriented" (pp. 83-84). However, the mention of Juan Ponce Enrile as "deeply spiritual in orientation" (p. 83) in the same sentence with Corazon Aquino, Cardinal Sin, and Cardinal Vidal raises questions about the general's analysis. Tolentino's chapter deals almost exclusively with the opposition role of the *Kilusang Bagong Lipunan* (KBL), but was not very informative. That the paper lacked substance is not surprising given the fact that Tolentino was a key figure in an abortive coup d'etat just a month after the conference—which he was unable to attend—resulting in this book being held up. The chapter by Villafuerte summarizes the economic and political problems facing the Aquino administration and briefly outlines ten major steps the government needs to take in order to stabilize and reinvigorate the economy. A more detailed explanation of how the ten major steps are to be accomplished would have been useful.

The book concludes with a question and answer section that further elaborates issues raised or overlooked in the substantive chapters. Although the final section is uneven, taken as a whole it is worth reading. The same is true as well of the book.

Robert Youngblood
Department of Political Science
Arizona State University