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## **Marcos Against the Church, by Youngblood**

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MARCOS AGAINST THE CHURCH: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL REPRESSION IN THE PHILIPPINES. By Robert L. Youngblood. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990. 211 pages.

Professor Youngblood's study of the conflict that developed between Marcos and the Catholic and Protestant churches marks an important contribution to the growing literature on the role of the church during and after the dictatorship. In this meticulously documented work, Youngblood argues that "a qualitative shift in the social action orientations of the Philippine Catholic and Protestant churches" during the 1960s eventually "collided with the development programs and the national security concerns of the Marcos regime."

Using an overall framework that argues the initial impetus for change within the Philippine churches as "externally generated," the author provides useful insights, but in turn his approach raises new questions. With the benefit of historical hindsight, it is easy to accept the argument that the various social encyclicals, Vatican II, and the policy changes in the World Council of Churches during the 1960s engendered a "qualitative shift in the social action orientations" of the churches. However, the more important problem concerns the specification of the social conditions that made these new progressive ideas and values efficacious at a particular conjuncture.

With the unraveling of the development policies pursued by the dictatorship, Youngblood correctly points out that the churches found themselves in a situation where they had to strengthen their commitment to social justice programs. This stronger commitment by the church to confront the oppressive social and political structures was not only impelled by the new direction provided by the papal encyclicals and Vatican II. More immediately, the Church had to confront the necessity of retaining its credibility and relevance as an institution of and for the people. Moreover, the communist-led challenge and alternative to both the government and the Church, particularly at the height of the struggle against the dictatorship made this task a more compelling need. In the process, this fleshing out of the new ecclesiological orientation especially by the more progressive and militant members of the church invited the ire of the regime which increasingly branded these activities as subversive.

Summarizing the heart of the conflict between the Church and the Marcos regime, Youngblood argues further that there was "a fundamental disagreement over the best means of eradicating unjust structures and ameliorating conditions for the poor . . ." How fundamental was this disagreement? It should be stressed, as the author himself realizes, that this fundamental disagreement over specific and long-term developmental policies was most consistently articulated not at the level of the official hierarchy of the churches but by the progressive and activist members who embraced the "community of liberation" model. Nonetheless, as Youngblood points out, it is a distinctive mark of the dynamism of the movement for change within

the church that even at the level of the Catholic bishops (Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines), no less than 15 or 19 percent were considered progressive or activist.

While focusing on the conflict that erupted between the dictatorship and the churches, Youngblood also examines how this confrontation ignited a process of change within the churches that may yet prove to be the most lasting impact of the struggle against the dictatorship. In the movement from "social action to liberation" theology (more properly the "theology of struggle" as theorized by Edicio de la Torre, its leading local proponent); in the dialogue and confrontation with the local versions of Marxism and Maoism; and in the establishment of the basic Christian communities, the Church has engaged itself in a momentous process of change and renewal whose climactic moments, notwithstanding the EDSA uprising, perhaps are yet to come.

In the preface to his work, Youngblood suggests that "the way church leaders, especially Cardinal Sin, participated in ousting Marcos and returning the Philippines to democracy was uniquely Filipino." While this claim to being "uniquely Filipino" is debatable, as the end product of the EDSA uprising is problematic, there is no doubt that the Church in Philippine society will continue to play a major role in any process of reform, revolution, or reaction in the country. In understanding the dynamics and direction of the Church's role in a decisive period in the country's history, Professor Youngblood has contributed an important work. It is hoped that his study will stimulate more researches into the role of the churches (including those of the Muslim, Aglipayan, Iglesia ni Kristo, the fundamentalist sects) in the country and the impact of the religious sensibility and identity on Philippine political practices and aspirations.

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