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Land, Poverty and Politics, by Canlas, et al

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vise the work of laborers of lower castes, with no agricultural ladder bridging them" (p. 104). The abolition of all regulations on land rental contracts would, however, resolve this problem.

The success of this alternative program of land reform is critically dependent on the financial disincentives to owning or operating large tracts of land. Implicitly in this program there is no need for a cumbersome Department of Agrarian Reform. Rather the key element of the program—a progressive land tax—can be administered by the Bureau of Internal Revenue. And instead of costing the government major sums of money, this proposal could actually generate government revenue.

While the authors have been careful to consider the political conditions in the Philippines that have allowed landed elites to subvert past and present land reform programs, they have not fully considered the political viability of their own proposal. Although the program's simplicity and transparency may make, as the authors argue, this program more implementable than the current land reform program, this reviewer remains skeptical about the political viability of the key element of this program, namely the government's ability to implement a progressive land tax that will discourage the holding of large tracts of land.

The Philippine record on tax collection is unsatisfactory. Without the proper supervision of field personnel, including severe penalties, tax collection will be mired by graft. With the existence of graft, tax collection, for all practical purposes, will be determined by a bargaining process between landowner and local tax collector. Such a system of taxation, unfortunately, will favor the larger landowner with his greater bargaining power. Therefore, in spite of the intent of the law, a progressive land tax would become in actuality a regressive tax. A *de facto* regressive land tax would favor the holding of larger tracts of land thus subverting the purpose of the program.

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LAND, POVERTY AND POLITICS IN THE PHILIPPINES.
By Mamerto Canlas, Mariano Miranda, Jr., and James Putzel. London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1988. 92 pages.

Land, Poverty and Politics in the Philippines is a collection of three essays. The first essay by Mariano Miranda is on "The Economics of Poverty and the Poverty of Economics: The Philippine Experience." The second essay by James Putzel is entitled "Prospects for Agrarian Reform Under the Aquino Government." And the last paper written by Mamerto Canlas is on "The Political Context." All three papers are quite sympathetic to the Philippine Left and critical of the Aquino administration as well as the "hierarchical" Catholic

Church. The essays are provocative; and while their analyses can be questioned, they squarely address key contemporary issues facing the Philippines.

In his economics essay, Miranda gives us an excellent overview of the situation of poverty in the Philippines. The situation in the Philippines is quite unique. Professor Gary Fields of Cornell University recently conducted a study for the World Bank on the relationship between economic growth and poverty ("Poverty, Inequality, and Economic Growth," Cornell University, mimeo-script, March 1989). In all the developing countries he studied with the exception of one, economic growth contributed to the reduction of poverty. The exception was the Philippines. In the Philippines we observe during the postwar period economic expansion alongside increasing levels of poverty.

Miranda argues that such underdevelopment in the Philippines is due primarily to the internationalization of the economy, with the United States being the main culprit. I found the argument a bit simplistic. Other economies that have "internationalized," such as Japan and the East Asian newly industrialized economies (NIE's), have done quite nicely in terms of both economic growth and poverty reduction. Therefore, there must be other reasons why the Philippine economy failed to significantly reduce poverty levels. Other factors such as the maldistribution of assets (which is mentioned by Miranda) as well as population growth and the maldistribution of political power probably have a more important role in explaining the Philippine failure in poverty reduction. Important research of an empirical nature still needs to be done to sort out these various plausible explanations.

The second essay by James Putzel on Land Reform for the most part chronicles the failure of the Aquino administration to implement an effective agrarian reform program. Putzel is critical of the trend in the Aquino administration away from agrarian reform and toward counter-insurgency.

I found the final essay by Mamerto Canlas on the Philippine political context to be the most interesting. There is a good discussion of the anatomy of Philippine politics, exploring the role of clans, the electoral system, political parties, the armed insurgencies, etc. This is followed by a discussion of the downfall of Marcos and the rise of Aquino. Again the perspective is sympathetic to the Left and critical of Aquino. Canlas feels that "the overall direction [of the Aquino administration] appears to be towards restoring an elite democracy and a form of repressive rule, and the US and the hierarchical Catholic Church seem to be actively promoting this process." Of course other commentators looking at the same situation might instead see a struggling and at times inept democratic government caught between the totalitarian forces of the Left and Right, and desperately in need of support from other democratic governments as well as from the Church.

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