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Trade Union Behavior, by Dejillas

Review Author: Patricio N. Abinales

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In his conclusion, Perttierra maintains that the conditions of postmodernity undermine the possibility of a sovereign Filipino perspective (the foundation of a genuinely Filipino social science) such as Jose Rizal's generation might have negotiated if not for the irruption of American imperialism. He also asserts that national boundaries are no longer the principal conditions of collective consciousness. However, we would do well to recall that integral to the formation of national consciousness has been the very act of crossing borders (witness the case of Rizal himself) and that "transnationality" underlines, as much as undermines, the primacy of "nation" (if not the nation-state) in an individual's imagination.

*Andrew J. Abalahin
History Department
Cornell University*

Trade Union Behavior in the Philippines, 1946-1990. By Leopoldo J. Dejillas. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995.

Using the three largest trade union federation as case studies, Prof. Dejillas examines the context in which these federations operate, the variations in their behavior when confronted with different issues, and the internal factors that influence their actions. He focuses his attention on the origins, the ideological orientation, the leadership and types of membership of these federations. He describes the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) as fitting the behavior of a "revolutionary type of unionism" where the workers' economic and related demands are often linked to a larger critique of Philippine political economy. The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), on the other hand, hews closer to the "economist or business type" of unionism, where the issues are strictly economic and the organization of workers is aimed at developing "a responsible and productive labor force" (124). The third group, the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), is categorized by Dejillas as shaped by a "moralist character," mainly because of its sectarian origins.

The findings are informative and revealing. In terms of composition, the TUCP appears to have the broader membership (it includes the rural proletariat), while the KMU and the FFW limit themselves only to the wage earners. This broader character of TUCP, however, is offset by its limited reach. KMU could claim to have a more national constituency than its conservative rivals, which have had difficulties developing or sustaining a nationwide network. KMU's organizational preeminence over TUCP and FFW was also clearly the result of the positive correlation between Left-wing politics and high degree of participation, militancy and variations in autonomy and centralism.

As a federation whose genesis was induced by the Marcos dictatorship, the TUCP mirrors much of the politics of its deceased benefactor: businesslike, patron-clientelist and limited popular participation. Its belated switch to the opposition in the last years of the Marcos period brought back some luster and a little democracy within its ranks, but its incorporation into the new regime almost immediately undermined these impulses. The most lamentable of the three has been the FFW. From its vibrant beginnings in the 1950s, it has deteriorated in membership (mainly in Metro Manila) and has become weaker. Perhaps to preserve what is left of its potency, its leadership has become more centralized and oligarchic, and the basis of fidelity is personal loyalty and "personal convenience" instead of an ideology or a program. The two possible major causes behind this decay were the FFW's compromise with Marcos in 1972, which split the organization, and the inability of its old leadership to recruit and give way to a new generation.

The decline of Left-wing politics in the Aquino and Ramos periods has, of course, affected the KMU considerably. The federation has split into various factions, duplicating the splits in the Philippine Left. One of the consequences is that the Left has lost one of its biggest advantages over the other federations—a national constituency. While the splinter groups have vowed to duplicate the feat of the old KMU, this is more intent than reality. The breakup of the Left-wing labor, however, did not mean a resurgence of the conservative and liberal wings. TUCP and FFW remain unable to extricate themselves out of their specific conditions and assume a leading role in the trade union movement. Both federations have practically disappeared in the political map, emerging from the woodwork only during the annual debate over wages. Their participation in the political arena has steadily diminished as their leaders age or are absorbed into the *cacique* democracy. Either way, the Filipino working class finds itself still at the losing end.

This is an extremely valuable book. While it does not go deeper into the political history of these federations (the book says very little, for example, on the impact of changing state formation on Filipino labor or on the relationship between changes in demographic, generational and regional profile of Filipino workers and the character of the federation), Professor Dejillas has made a significant contribution to the continuing effort to write the story of Filipino labor.

*Patricia N. Abinales
Department of Political Science
Ohio University*