

105 kilometres from Jakarta, much too far for daily commuting, 87 per cent of the household heads work in Jakarta, nearly all as bread-sellers or taxi-drivers. They survive by finding a *tauke* or accommodation boss (within what is meant to be a “closed city” for migrants) who is prepared to declare them to the authorities to be his “relatives” or “guests” from his village. As for the daily commuters who come into Jakarta by train, Castles notes that the figures must be suspect, because of the number of people who manage to evade paying the fare. It is these touches (all too sparse in the book as a whole) which remind the reader that at the end of the day, economic growth has to do with people; and it is the human dimension, rather than dry figures of gross domestic product (GDP) growth, which ought to be the true focus in analysing development.

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***Truth and Power: Robert S. Hardie and Land Reform Debates in the Philippines, 1950–1987.* By Paul M. Monk. Monash Paper No. 20. Clayton, Victoria, Australia: Centre for Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, 1990.**

Paul M. Monk’s point is that U.S. involvement in Philippine land reform programmes after 1950 is not a mere agenda in an overall U.S. cold war strategy that coincided with the conservatism of the Philippine élite. Rather, U.S. involvement through policy recommendations, financial and political support was a serious attempt to make the land problem part of a programme of action by Filipino and American policy-makers. These Filipinos and Americans never took the recommendations seriously for reasons of their own. For Filipino leaders, the reasons were their conservatism and seemingly unsolvable problem of maladministration. For American policy-makers, they were the vagaries of the balance of power within the U.S. foreign policy bureaucracy and fluctuating interest and selective memories of U.S. representatives in the Philippines.

Monk successfully threads this thin line of distinction, thus contributing to freeing the debate on the fate of Philippine land reform programmes from an “external variable oriented” explanation and from the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism. He starts his discussion by tracing the fate of a policy recommendation in 1951 on Philippine land tenancy entitled *Philippine*

Land Tenure Reform: Analysis and Recommendations, authored by Robert S. Hardie. An energetic Nebraskan agricultural economist and new dealer, Hardie was sent to the Philippines from Japan where he was deeply involved in the land reform programme of SCAP from July 1946 to July 1949.

Had Hardie's recommendations for land reform in the Philippines been followed, the purchase and sale of land would have been accomplished within two years, title registration in three years, and amortization would have taken thirty years, with possible extension. Thus, had the regular session of the Philippine Congress in 1952 passed an effective land reform law, the programme would have been completed by 1982 at the earliest, or 1985 if there was an extension. President Quirino rejected the recommendations. The U.S. Government did not press him on it. True, counter-insurgency was a consideration of Hardie, but why should satisfied farmers not reject a non-income-earning rebellion? Hardie's recommendations cannot be construed then as part of an overall cold war policy strategy. As Monk pointed out, the famous Edward Lansdale, a CIA officer in the Philippines between 1950 and 1954, never even heard of the Hardie report.

The years between the release of the Hardie report and the Aquino regime have been characterized by temporizing and maladministration by Philippine presidents, and off-and-on American interest on land reform. American ambivalence was most pronounced during the martial law years of the Marcos regime. Monk illustrates shifting U.S. involvement through an impressive array of internal documents of the U.S. mission to the Philippines and exchanges of messages between them and the home offices.

Beyond transcending old clichés about land reform in the Philippines, Monk raises, I think, a very important point in his monograph. The point begins to unfold when Monk quoted Lewis Gleeck, an AID officer in Manila who wrote in 1974 that,

the atmosphere of the New Society was [sic] radical. . . (Department of Agrarian Reform) thought its day had come and rushed to do the President's bidding without any real plan or system. . . . We were not aware, however, (nor was the President) of the faulty data base for the program. Although the DAR (and the [Land Authority] before the DAR) had been doing little but gather data for almost ten years, they were almost totally unreliable — which is perhaps the most critical indictment that could be drawn up against the defunct agency. No-one really knew how many tenants there actually were, how much land was involved, or what the profile of land ownership was! This ignorance had bedevilled the program since (pp. 113–14, emphasis by Monk).

If the data were totally unreliable, what then was the present state of the Philippine rural economy which land reform was supposed to rectify? No one really knows even now. Monk tackles the problem of unreliable data by extrapolating from existing Philippine government data and studies on tenancy, such as that of J.E. Rocamora and David O'Connor, and Benedict J. Kerkvliet. Rocamora and O'Connor admit that their figures on land tenancy are "guesstimates". Monk's extrapolations inevitably inherit the guesses on the figures. This is not a fault in Monk's work because he had already signalled where a future debate on land reform could possibly start in the near future — namely, what really is workable in the Philippines once we know the situation of the rural economy.

Monk asserts that an argument put forward by American scholars Ross Eshelman and Chester Hunt must be taken seriously. These two scholars have suggested that to abolish tenancy in the Philippines and create the maximum possible number of family-sized farms "will be attempting to make the water flow uphill". They cautioned that "if disastrous effects are to be avoided, it will be necessary to use pragmatic criterion of what is likely to work, rather than ideological test of which policies harmonize best with left-wing slogans" (pp. 136–37).

This advice of Monk can become the starting point of a debate on land reform. Before that, however, there must be reliable data generated through a massive nation-wide survey of the agricultural sector. Monk also makes clear that the Hardie report and the other reports he had discussed cannot be taken as a dogma or continuing indictment of land tenancy in the Philippines. Social reality has changed since the time of Hardie.

Why then use Hardie's report as a starting point for opening a debate on Philippine land reform? Had Monk not informed his readers that this monograph is part of a larger dissertation one can say that he at times belaboured the contents of the Hardie report, only to say at the end that things have changed since then. But it is only a monograph now, and a future book seems promising. However, there are tables in Monk's book that are not sufficiently integrated into the text, such as a partial listing of U.S. embassy personnel, presumably as *dramatis personae*. The names of many of them never really got into the act, as portrayed in the text by Monk.

These things, however, do not detract from the significance of Monk's contribution to a much needed renewed debate on land reform in the Philippines.

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