



## FEATURE REVIEWS

Abinales, Patricio N. ed. 2010. *Revisiting Marxism in the Philippines: Selected Essays*. Manila: Anvil Publishing, Inc. 212 pp.

Chapter One: “The millenarian-populist aspects of Filipino Marxism” by Francisco Nemenzo Jr.

Francisco Nemenzo’s essay will make a historian of the radical movements in the Philippines happy. It is a document that shows the nature of the ideological debates inside the movement from the 1930s up to the 1980s. Not being privy to most of the details Nemenzo had discussed and the exchanges in the open forum after the essay’s initial delivery as a lecture in the 1980s, I will limit my present comment to the essay’s historical context. I will comment on two historical premises upon which Nemenzo’s lecture had proceeded: the matter of the *gremios* (craft guilds) and the supposed anti-intellectualism in Philippine society.

Regarding the first, Nemenzo thought that radicalism in the Philippines evolved from early trade unions, which in turn could trace their beginnings from the *gremios* of the late nineteenth century. But documents from the National Archives show that there was no connection between *gremios* and industry and commerce, as was the case in medieval Europe until the advent of the Industrial Revolution. The *gremios* in the Philippines were organized by the government for the purpose of collecting taxes. Thus, the Chinese belonged to the *gremios de Chinos/Sangley*, while the native elite belonged to the *gremios de naturales*.

The second premise is anti-intellectualism in Philippine society. If this was indeed prevalent, then how can one explain the observations

by American correspondents such as W.B. Wilcox and L.R. Sargent in 1900, who saw that even people living in remote villages knew how to read and write and knew about intellectual personages such as Thomas Edison? They had at least an inkling as to what was happening outside of their villages. Then Albert Sonnichsen, while in captivity in the Ilocos and Abra, wrote about the desire of the Filipinos to be tutored in English, literature, science, and mathematics, through lessons that the American prisoners gave for a fee. We must also remember that the revolutionary government, even in those perilous times, saw to the establishment of a university, and secondary and elementary schools in various regions.

I suspect that the radical movement itself had exaggerated both the early beginnings of trade unions and anti-intellectualism because they had framed the situation through the lens of class struggle in their analysis. Although it is true that there were unions as early as 1900 with the influence of anarcho-syndicalists among the *ilustrados* (the educated elite, specifically Isabelo de los Reyes and Dominador Gomez), the dominant thought was anti-imperialist and pro-independence framed within the ideology of *kalayaan* (independence) and *kabayanihan* (heroism), which never divided society into classes. The desire was *kapatiran* (fraternity) and *kasamahan* (solidarity) as indicated in Apolinario Mabini's "Ang Tunay na Dekalogo" (The True Decalogue) and Jacinto's "Kartilya ng Katipunan" (The Katipunan Charter). The members were both *kapatid* and *kasama*—brother and comrade—concepts that later historians would attribute to millenarianism and religiosity.

That the Katipunan ideology was the dominant strain in the radical movement could be seen in Crisanto Evangelista becoming a member of *Legionarios del Trabajo* (made up mostly of ex-Katipuneros) while also being a trade unionist. He established the original Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP) on the very anniversary of the Cry of Balintawak (August 26, 1930).

In other words, in my thinking, there is a need to reexamine more closely the philological connection between the PKP and the Katipunan to explain why *kapatid* came to be identified with the members of religious groups, while *kasama* became the designation of those in the radical underground. Is the bifurcation a function of the radicalization of intellectuals, who fostered in the process an anti-Katipunan orientation while trying to make use of the Katipunan symbols that seemed useful to the mobilization of the masses? In the 1960s, such appropriation was quite apparent in the use of the letter "K" written in the old Tagalog script within a triangle as the emblem of Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP)-affiliated Kabataang Makabayan

(Nationalist Youth) and the claim in the first issue of the CPP publication *Progressive Review* of the need for a Second Propaganda Movement. Yet, as can be read in the various pamphlets of the historian Renato Constantino, the same ilustrados valorized in the *Kabataang Makabayan* were rejected as the traitors of the movement of the masses.—**JAIME B. VENERACION**, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PHILOSOPHY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN

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*Chapter Two and Chapter Six: "Some random reflections on Marxism and Maoism in the Philippines" and "The dialectics of Kaluwagan: Echoes of a 1978 debate" by Armando Malay Jr.*

These two articles by Armando Malay Jr. raise a number of interesting and important questions. I will address two of these issues. First, what is the continuing relevance of Maoism to the party and its struggle in light of the changes in the country and the world since the founding of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in 1968? Second, will the armed struggle continue to play a prominent role in the party's strategy, especially if a moderate, reformist regime comes into power?

The end of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 provides a convenient starting point for addressing these issues. This political transition restored formal elite electoral politics with all of its contradictions. In the process, it opened up new opportunities and constraints for the opposition movement, especially one committed to armed struggle such as the CPP. Historically, successful cases of revolutionary movements engaged in armed struggle have usually triumphed in political environments bereft of any tradition of electoral politics. When such parties find themselves operating in a system where electoral practices have gained some popular acceptance, they oftentimes face difficult options. Does the party jettison its armed struggle and transform itself into a normal electoral party? Does it continue the armed struggle and ignore electoral politics? Or does it try to pursue both the armed and electoral struggle with all of the contradictory policies and choices such an option presents?

Indeed, the communist parties in the Philippines, both the old (the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas, founded in 1930) and the new (the CPP), found themselves facing these difficult options at varying periods in their history. When opportunities were present for electoral struggles, both parties actively engaged in this arena of contestation.

We saw this in the Democratic Alliance coalition initiated by the old party in 1946 and the various electoral contests participated in by the new party or parties aligned with it in the post-Marcos era. Among the left-wing parties since 2001, the party list groups identified with the CPP have in fact gained the biggest number of elected representatives in the lower house.

Reflecting the new challenges for contesting political power, the restoration of electoral politics after the end of the dictatorship provoked an internal split that fractured the once cohesive CPP. As Malay points out in "The Dialectics of Kaluwagan," this problem already existed as early as 1978, when Marcos called for elections to what was obviously a sham parliament. At that time, the elections provoked contentious debates within the party because the regional party in Metro Manila decided to actively participate in the polls, which was against the election boycott policy of the party's Central Committee.

To provide a wider context for understanding the new challenges faced by Marxist-inspired revolutionary movements pursuing the armed struggle, we need to look at developments in other developing countries where such parties or movements operate. In Central and Latin America, the major revolutionary parties and movements once engaged in armed struggle have evolved into electoral parties after politically negotiated settlements to civil war (such as the Sandinistas in Nicaragua and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador) or the military defeat of the guerrilla movements. Other Marxist-inspired or socialist-oriented movements in countries such as Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Venezuela now also operate as legal political parties, and some of them have gained power via the parliamentary route.

Closer to home and with greater resonance because of its Maoist pedigree, the communist movement in Nepal has also participated in parliamentary elections after a peace agreement with the government. While many problems of transition into a full legal party remain to be addressed, the Nepalese experience provides a compelling example of how a Maoist guerrilla movement has sought to win power through open parliamentary elections. Interestingly, the Nepalese communist movement shifted to the electoral route at a time of substantial gains in its military and political strength. Is this a feasible option for the CPP?

The Philippines faces a situation where the state is too weak to defeat the communist-led guerrillas, but the guerrillas also lack the strength to win a decisive victory. In the classic Maoist formulation,

political power is won by building a guerrilla army in the countryside where the state is weakest. However, the CPP's actual practice is far more nuanced than the strategy suggested by a rigid Maoist formula. In fact, the party has engaged in extraordinary combinations of armed and legal work reaching out to various classes and sectors. Thus, the party does not simply call itself a Maoist party but officially a party guided by Marxism-Leninism and Maoism.

What then are the prospects for the transformation of the CPP into a normal, legal party committed to contesting power through the electoral route? The easy answer to this is that such a transformation will come about as the result of a successfully negotiated settlement with the central government. But this begs the question: What then are the prospects of a negotiated political settlement given the long history of failed peace talks in the past?

There are a number of factors that will come into play in considering the prospects of this alternative option by the CPP. The decisive factor lies in the party's assessment of the continuing viability of waging the armed struggle in the face of the prospects of greater political stability. Such stability would be greatly enhanced if the current administration succeeds in putting an end to the rebelliousness in the military and concludes a final peace agreement with the Muslim-separatist Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

A serious assessment by the party of its performance in the post-Marcos electoral struggles will also be crucial input to exploring its alternative strategic options. For instance, with the party's impressive performance in the party list elections, one could expect a greater openness to explore fully the openings provided by the parliamentary option. At the same time, party cadres who have been long rooted in countryside work and military struggles will be expected to resist any sudden changes in strategy. They will also be expected to demand guarantees for the retention of political gains that could be lost in the process of political settlements to the armed conflict.

Finally, the role of leaders in crafting a way out of a crisis as intractable and protracted as that of the Philippines is a crucial element of the negotiations process. Precisely because structural reforms and institution building move at a glacial pace in the country, we need leaders on both sides of the conflict who are farsighted and decisive enough to use every opportunity to push the process forward.—  
**TEMARIO C. RIVERA**, *PROFESSOR, INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY-TOKYO*

*Chapter Three: "Marxism and Christianity in the Philippines: 1930-1983"*  
by Mario Bolasco

Reading Mario Bolasco's "Marxism and Christianity in the Philippines (1930-1983)" is like going back a century in time, though it was written only twenty-six years ago. Perhaps that is because a great many things have happened since then—events that have not been within anyone's purview at that time.

Let me go straight to the three main lines of events that make Bolasco's essay seem like a period piece:

1. Some economic changes in Philippines society that are revolutionary in the traditional Marxist sense, but certainly have a bearing on what we may expect in the future;
2. The response of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) to these changes; and
3. The rise of new forces outside both the institutional Catholic church and the CPP that understand these economic changes and mean to carry them through to their logical conclusion.

Let me begin with the first of these lines. Towards the 1980s, economically plagued by his failed adventure with martial law, Ferdinand Marcos started to open the doors of the country on a large scale to Filipino workers seeking greener pastures abroad. This gave rise to the phenomenon of the overseas Filipino worker (OFW). When Corazon Aquino took over in 1986, she did not stem the OFW tide. Instead, eager to reap the bounties of overseas remittances, her administration encouraged emigration. Today, this phenomenon persists unabated.

In the first decade of OFW flight abroad, OFW families in the Philippines, in almost frantic fashion typical of those who lay their hands on big amounts of money for the first time, bought up all the appliances that they could, filling up their houses with refrigerators, TV sets, radios, and whatever else money could buy at that time. This was the 1980s. Here was crass consumerism to the hilt.

In the second decade, having had their fill of appliances, they began to buy a hectare or two of farmlands as well as 30-100 square meter lots, erecting skeletons of houses on these lots until, little by the little, they were able to build structures made of cement and corrugated iron that

they could call home. This was the 1990s. Here you will see the OFW gaining some sense of balance, looking to the future and starting to think of investment, but tied down by the traditional real estate concept of it.

In the third decade, which some call the Naughts, not a few of these OFWs and OFW families started relatively viable but still small businesses—some in the area of water refilling stations, others in handicrafts, still others in small manufactures like soap, shampoos or herbal concoctions. Most, however, just buy vans, tricycles or condominiums, as they are still tied to the traditional real estate/service concept of investment.

While most of us Marxists would cavil at the idea of OFWs and their families making it in our world, preferring to see them as perpetually enslaved and oppressed, their economic status has in fact changed in the past three decades. Where they started out as sons and daughters of workers and peasants three decades ago, today, after all those decades of slow and painful accumulation often lost to unscrupulous recruiters, we cannot but call them lower middle class, or, in correct Marxist parlance, lower petty bourgeoisie.

This is so especially because throughout those three decades, these OFW families did not tire of sending at least one if not two or three in their family to school—not to expensive private universities like Ateneo or La Salle, of course, but some college or trade school or state university in the provinces, and often even in the University of the Philippines-Diliman. I have had not a few students whose mothers are caregivers and whose fathers are band members.

In other words, both economically and intellectually, no matter how skewed their English is or how poorly they communicate even in Filipino, these OFW families now rightly belong to the petty bourgeoisie. Most of them may still be lower petty bourgeoisie, but I am telling you that they are rising up the social ladder both by dint of hard work and through entrepreneurship. We therefore cannot rightfully say that the petty bourgeoisie now compose only 7 percent of our population, as it did by Jose Maria Sison's count in 1970. I will not venture a figure, but it certainly is not that small anymore.

What may be of more interest to us now is line number two—how the CPP responded to these changes. In the 1980 plenum of the CPP, Santiago Salas, then its chairman, would not hear of Isagani Serrano's plea that Marcos's muzzling of the big landlord and comprador classes in favor of his own clique—many of whom came from the upper and middle petty bourgeoisie—had created a new balance in Philippine society. Salas instead regaled the plenum with his own analysis that the

workers could rely only on the poorest of the poor peasants because the other poor peasants were not landless per se—the middle peasants were the petty bourgeoisie of the countryside and the rich peasants were the national bourgeoisie of the countryside.

As soon as I got a hold of the legal organizations of the middle forces, I ordered a re-study of the new class proportions that Philippine society had arrived at in the first few years of the 1980s. However, I would not see the outcome of such a study, with the 1983 Aquino assassination and its stubborn aftermath having already led me to conclude that Salas's paranoia would soon lead to a massive purge within the party. So how did the CPP respond to these changes? It did not, as you may well see in many documents.

Now for number three; the rise of new forces outside of the institutional Catholic church and the CPP that understand these changes and mean to carry them through to their logical conclusion. When Mario Bolasco was asked about his definition of Christianity and being told that his definition was confusing, he answered that "Christians are very confused themselves" and so he had proceeded sociologically—that is, somebody who identifies himself as a Christian.

Today, Catholics do not even identify themselves as Christian. When they venture to call themselves Christian, they immediately append the word "Catholic." That is, they have become hyphenated Christians, Christian-Catholic or Catholic-Christian, depending on whichever they may value more—their institutional affiliation, or their belief in Christ. This change in nomenclature is an indication of what has been happening in the past thirty-four years. In Bolasco's time, before 1983, during the first decade of martial rule, the institutional Catholic church, tied as it was to feudalism and landlordism, still held sway in the minds of the majority of the people despite Marcos's pick-axing of big landlord estates through confiscation and the feeble beginnings of land reform.

Pressure on government from the likes of the World Bank to institute land reform—i.e., the breaking up of large estates—for the ostensible purpose of ushering in a cash economy as well as silencing the likes of the NPA, which thrives on peasant unrest, has to some extent broken down the hold of the feudal institutional Catholic church on the population. But the major slide downward of Catholicism has come from the entry of Born Again Christianity, which started in the late 1970s and early 1980s with numerous visits of evangelical Americans with a Baptist background but with a new musical and lively approach to faith. Why did they catch on, as the surly Protestants of the 1900s never did? Was it because of the music? Perhaps. But the

more believable reason is that the belief was in large part picked up by the families of those very OFWs who, having earned enough cash, began to look at faith as a positive, life-giving experience rather than a cross-bearing syndrome, as the Catholic church has always treated it, or a strict ordinance to obey, as the Puritanically-inclined Protestants do.

Bolasco, in the transcript of the open forum that took place after he delivered a lecture that became this essay, mentions the *El Shaddai*. The first picture you get of *El Shaddai* is of umbrellas turned upside down and open purses turned upward. This is to catch the blessings of heaven—literally meaning money, of course. It is the practice of the poor who are perpetually in want. Other Born Again Christian fellowships like the Jesus is Lord Movement would subsequently call this the Prosperity Gospel, frowning upon it, having learned through their decades of belief that God can put them through periods of hardship to test their faith. However, on the whole, their faith brings them blessings, a better life, and better relationships—the very stuff that the new lower petty bourgeoisie have proven to be true in their own lives, because they pray and believe ardently in the efficacy of their prayers.

In short, the rising new lower petty bourgeoisie is in large part born again, whether they are Christian in the sense of being Born Again Christians, or Catholic-Christians, or Catholic charismatic, not wholly beholden to the institutional Catholic church though they could not give up either on its rituals or its support.

But the question now arises, and I am sure you are asking this in your minds—are they revolutionary?

In the sense that they would take up arms and join the CPP and the New People's Army, no, I am afraid I cannot make you happy with a yes to that.

But in the sense that they are patriotic, nationalistic, democratic, and would want to see the Philippines transformed into a progressive, prosperous, and independent nation—yes, I believe so. In the sense that they can do so by launching their own entrepreneurial ventures and taking over government from the national level to the barangay—yes. In the sense that they can see through U.S. designs on the Philippines, especially Mindanao—yes. In the sense that they have stopped appreciating landlordism—yes. In the sense that they understand what bureaucrat capitalism means, as long as it is explained to them as the corrupt use of power to amass wealth—yes. In the sense that they reject fascism outright—yes. In the sense that they understand their prehistory and Philippine history more than the ordinary Leftist activist ever has—yes, I have seen to that.

Do you agree? Are they revolutionary? That is for you to judge, if you would care to mingle with them and be one with them.—**MILA D. AGUILAR**, FORMER PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND COMPARATIVE LITERATURE, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN

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*Chapter Four: “Marxism and the peasantry: The Philippine case” by Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista*

Maria Cynthia Rose Banzon Bautista’s article is an important contribution to the literature on Marxism and the peasantry. The first part of the paper is a succinct and well laid-out exposition of the theoretical debates among Marxists that underpinned the 1960s and 1970s with respect to the mode of production (MOP) issue in so far as this concerns the peasantry and rural political economy.

As a matter of necessity, the MOP debates at that time often gravitated towards sharp discussions on the agrarian question, i.e., determining whether rural society was already capitalist or still in the feudal mode. The theoretical expositions are not an easy read for it requires an extensive knowledge of technical and oftentimes abstract political economy terms as well as an appreciation of the political and historical contexts of the debates.

The implications of the two opposing positions were obvious though. If Philippine society continued to be feudal, or semi-feudal (to use a rather cumbersome Maoist characterization), social change would then be directed towards a bourgeois democratic agenda. Conversely, asserting that capitalism had already established itself as the dominant MOP in the country would require advocating for a socialist transformation of society. Bautista appears to take the position that capitalist relations have already taken root in the Philippine countryside as expounded in her case study of the rice sector in the second part of her paper. At the same time, however, she issues a cautionary note in the case of rural proletarians who continue to have links with the non-capitalist sector. She points out in pages 100-101 that

Many of the wage-earning “rural proletariat” retained access to land through family ties or through sharecropping and tenant farming. Even in some non-rice haciendas in Negros, the sugar workers who were often considered more proletarian when compared to their counterparts in

rice and coconut, did not obtain their subsistence completely from their wages.

This insight could be potentially problematic unless one goes a few pages back to what Bautista herself refers to on p. 90, i.e., the existence of a distinct peasant mode of production that is able to reproduce itself—if I may add, not just as an economic category but together with its social, political, and cultural characteristics.

Marx himself used the MOP concept “in several senses,”<sup>1</sup> but for me, the more useful one is its more inclusive sense, i.e., “all social relations which include political, ideological, as well as economic relations” (Fine and Harris 1979,12-13). De Janvry (1981, 96) noted that while Marx often used the term “peasant mode of production,”<sup>2</sup> he never gave a precise and exclusive definition of “mode of production;” instead, he used it “to refer to, sometimes . . . the manner (i.e., mode) of material production and sometimes to the broad organization of society; sometimes it is a concrete historical object and other times an abstract model.” Fine and Harris (1979, 12-13) also pointed out that “Marx uses the concept of mode of production in several senses, sometimes referring specifically to production, sometimes to the economic process as a whole, and sometimes to all social relations which include political, ideological and economic relations.”

Thus, following Althusser and Balibar (1970) and Poulantzas (1973), Fine and Harris adopt the all-embracing, concept of a mode of production. If the MOP concept is to be taken in its broad sense, then there are grounds for ascribing to peasant society a specific and unique mode of production. Its family-based labor; production for basic needs (use value) and not for profit (exchange value); its kinship social organizational patterns (reciprocity); its self-sufficiency and capacity to reproduce itself; the feeling of community in relation to external forces appropriating the farm surplus product and exercising political hegemony over it; its distinct cultural norms, cognitions and practices (world view); and persistence throughout human history all point to a distinct and relatively stable socioeconomic system.

Bautista’s observation of rural proletarians maintaining links with the non-capitalist sector, i.e., smallholder peasant production, makes sense because of the ability of the peasant mode to reproduce itself, be self-sustaining, resilient, able to co-exist with the capitalist sector, and be basically resistant to external interventions. To understand this situation better, the concept of articulation and co-existence of modes of production provides a helpful framework (Wolpe 1980).

This brings me to my second point. Peasant or agrarian studies, which have become a neglected field for the past decades, appear to be enjoying a resurgence these days. The works of scholars like James C. Scott, Teodor Shanin, Henry Bernstein, Benedict Kerkvliet, Cristobal Kay, Terence Byres, Haroon Akhram-Lodhi, Jonathan Fox, Marc Edelman, Ian Scoones, Dominique Caouette, and others have been significant in renewing interest in the peasantry. The revitalization and reorientation of the *Journal of Peasant Studies* (JPS) after the split in 2000 which saw the emergence of the *Journal of Agrarian Studies* bodes well for the discipline.

Filipino academics will be proud to know that the new JPS is under the able editorship of Saturnino “Jun” Borras, who was a peasant organizer, deputy secretary general of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines, or KMP), and co-founder of the global peasant movement La Via Campesina, before taking his MA and PhD (Development Studies) at the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague. Now based at St. Mary’s University in Halifax, Borras is considered one of the top agrarian scholars in the world today.

Agrarian and peasant studies are now more important than ever given the following developments: (1) the 2008 global food crisis that compromised the food security of many developing nations and caused food riots in several countries; (2) the rapid development of biofuel production and the resultant corporate landgrabblings of millions of hectares of land all over the world to bring this about, and (3) the continuing failure of land reforms in many developing countries, including the Philippines. The Hacienda Luisita scandal and tragedy stand out in this context.

But the most compelling reason for the relevance of peasant and agrarian studies is that far from disappearing, the peasantry and their small farmholdings have instead persisted. Michael Lipton (2005), cites a United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization global agricultural census in eighty-one countries conducted between 1960 and 1990, which reveals that a “large and growing proportion of farmland is being cultivated in small holdings; and a large and growing proportion of farm operators is small.”

For the Philippines, the latest official data reveal that farms below seven hectares in size comprise 70 percent of total farm area and that the average size of farms has declined from 2.2 hectares in 1991 to 2.0 hectares in 2002 (National Statistics Office 2005). Lipton further observes that the phenomenon of small farms “occupying increasing shares of farmland in developing countries” is taking place “even during

the period of (and in the areas exposed to) intense liberalization and globalization.”

Smallholder production, the basis of peasant farming, thus continues to play a prominent role in the agricultural economies of many countries.

Lastly, over the past two decades there has been an upsurge of agrarian and peasant unrest in Latin America (primarily Mexico, Brazil, and Bolivia), China, and Vietnam against market-oriented and modernizing regimes (Tadem 2005). These include the Zapatista movement in Mexico which began in the 1990s and was directed against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the landless peasant group *Movimiento Dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra* (Brazil Landless Workers' Movement, or MST) in Brazil, the indigenous people's movement in Bolivia that resulted in the election of its leader, Evo Morales, as President in 2006, and reports of widespread peasant protests against liberalization and market-oriented government policies in Vietnam and China. Additionally, new forms of rural resistance have merged in Southeast Asia, creating new sites of struggle through “counterhegemonic” movements (Turner and Caouette 2009).<sup>3</sup> The growth of the *La Via Campesina* global movement primarily aimed against neoliberal globalization further underscores the level of restiveness among rural populations around the world.—  
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## NOTES

1. The next five paragraphs are taken from Tadem (2005).
2. Instances where Marx referred to peasant economies as a “mode of production” are in Marx (1967a, 761) (Chapter 32: “Historical Tendency of Capitalist Accumulation”), Marx (1967b, 807) (“Chapter 47: Genesis of Capitalist Ground Rent”), and in “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (Marx 1969, 478).
3. These involve indigenous farmers in the Philippines, rural ethnic communities in Vietnam, small-scale farmers in Indonesia, and rural communities in Thailand.

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*Chapter Five: "On the mode of production in the Philippines: Some old-fashioned questions on Marxism" by Ricardo D. Ferrer*

Sometime in the 1990s, when I was a researcher for the Ibon Foundation, I was assigned to review selected Philippine literature on the modes of production in the Philippines. At that point, Ibon was in transition. I do not know whatever happened to that review, but I am certain that in 1992 it had become moot and academic as far as Ibon was concerned. If I am to believe some of the hearsay accounts of my friends who remain in Ibon, it went straight to the trashcan.

I recall that among the papers I read for the review, it was Ricardo D. Ferrer's analysis on the Philippine mode of production that struck me the most. For one, it departed from the statistical debate on whether or not the market and wage relations have become dominant throughout the economy, particularly in the agrarian sector. Instead, Ferrer looked at the most advanced segment of Philippine economy with all its seemingly capitalist features, and argued that its internal motion cannot be capitalist, but rather more properly described as "semi-feudal and semi-colonial."

This work of Professor Ferrer may have been, as Patricio Abinales surmises, a result of the mobilization by the Communist Party of the Philippines of its intellectuals to attack the heresies of that time. But if we look closely at Professor Ferrer's analysis, I doubt whether his framework would have found acceptance within the party, which was also mired in the statistical debate, believing only the dominance of feudalism.

I submit that the power of the Ferrer framework is its post-revolution programmatic implication. This fits within the national democratic terminology at that time, but he also refers to it in other works as national or new democracy, or mixed economy, an alternative transitional economy for an underdeveloped economy.

Just to give examples of the possible elements of this program:

One, insofar as capitalism still has an enormous role to play in developing productive forces, certain capitalist mechanisms will have to be retained, but in socially responsive forms. An example is social ownership with leasehold arrangements based on capacity to expand, to be competitive, and to be innovative.

Two, it rejects the ideology that entails leaving to the market the direction of the evolution of economy. However, it does not propose to shut down markets or shift to a fully planned economy. Instead, the program focuses on how the state on behalf of the society can gain access to the surplus being realized in the various markets.

Three, it will be a planned economy, in the sense that there is an overriding planning of its operation and constant monitoring of outcomes arising from the operations of the plan and the markets, and evaluating them against specified targets, and adjusting accordingly where targets fail.

Four, state control, intervention and ownership alongside private ownership and cooperative ownership shall be guided by the plan.

However, the plan must not confine itself to the economic agenda. Indeed, the feasibility of the economic agenda presupposes an alternative, responsive social context. Ferrer argues that this context must be pluralist.

The height of Ferrer's theorizing may have come at the time when the predominant question was how to best wage the revolutionary struggle. In this context, its more post-revolutionary programmatic bent may have been irrelevant to the party leadership. In fact, to the party at the time, any program will do.

But that time is past. Today we are confronted by different realities. The revolutionary struggle is not between the threshold of victory as it was thought to be at that time. The free market agenda has won out

decisively in the 1990s, although that has since shown its equally decisive failure, as Ferrer himself predicted.

What remains is that, even after the ouster of Marcos, we are still in the clutches of an elite-dominated, non-pluralist, and non-responsive social context. Now, more than ever, we need an inspiring program of change. We need to restart the revolutionary movement. All things considered, perhaps part of that is because socialist groups continue to fail to inspire. I think Ferrer's more rigorous and at the same time more humanist framework deserves a fresh look from the younger generation.—  
**NEPOMUCENO A. MALALUAN, TRUSTEE, ACTION FOR ECONOMIC REFORMS**

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*Chapter Seven: "The Filipino Left at the crossroads: Current debates on strategy and revolution" by Alexander R. Magno*

Alexander R. Magno's conservative, even right-wing political positions are well known today. He would therefore probably not endorse most, if not all the assertions he wrote in this old essay. Magno's ideological reversal is an issue that cannot at all be glossed upon when reading his earlier works. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity to take up this matter here. The essay in question must therefore be read "in itself," with all of the weaknesses such a limited reading entails. Given these constraints, it could be said that Magno's essay is valuable as an historical document, being a sober, balanced, and generally penetrating conjunctural analysis of the "Philippine Left at the crossroads." However, it is also a remarkably insightful piece because of some of the general principles it proposes, which bear upon the study of social movements.

Notwithstanding a contemporary conjunctural analysis of various Philippine Left formations, Magno's observation twenty years ago that the then still developing non-National-Democratic Lefts had yet to delineate a "comprehensive strategic perspective" or "revolutionary paradigm" arguably still holds. It is also evident that the National Democratic (ND) movement has in the meantime changed in many respects from how Magno understood it at the time. His observation that the ND movement had no clear notion of "qualitatively differentiated political phases" or any expectation of "spontaneous political action" has probably been mitigated since then. The complexity of the different types of alliance work and parliamentary struggles that the ND Left has been engaged with in recent years has clearly changed several

aspects of its political practice in very significant ways. Finally, Magno's assertion that the 1986 boycott mistake made apparent to the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) membership for the first time the fact that the vanguard may not "always be correct" may have some truth to it, but only within a very short term perspective. Such a statement forgets that the origin of the CPP was in fact the effort to "rectify" what were seen to be the fatal mistakes of the older vanguard party represented by the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas. Another forgotten trauma that probably also affected the CPP at the time of its founding and informed its subsequent practice was the annihilation of the Partai Komunis Indonesia (PKI) in 1965. The beginning of the CPP, or the party of the "persevering revolutionaries" as Dominique Caouette puts it, thus actually began with the recognition of the "vanguard" making fatal errors and the nightmarish possibility of "total failure."

The particular analyses Magno presents are necessarily ephemeral in certain respects but the general theses he enumerates at the end of the essay are perhaps of more lasting significance. Some of these therefore deserve to be quoted at length:

1. "In spite of its apparent adherence to a distinct orthodoxy, the national democratic movement has, in practice, demonstrated some amount of flexibility and a willingness to enrich, if not segmentally transform, its strategic perspective on the basis of accumulated revolutionary experience;"
2. "No maturely formed social institution abruptly abandons the worldview in which it was developed and the national democratic movement is not likely to whimsically abandon the image of revolution that is the basis of its political identity and its reason for being;"
3. "Inasmuch as history is never entirely the product of intent, there is no way of establishing with finality the correctness of one revolutionary vision over the other;"
4. "Differences in strategy are always resolved in the sphere of political practice and not in philosophy."

These are all very interesting and useful propositions. The most pressing question is, why have these not been applied in any rigorous, historical and empirical analysis of the ND movement since then? Recent academic studies on the ND movement can be said to have

failed to observe most of these important principles (with the possible exception of Caouette's massive unpublished dissertation). Magno's crucial second observation quoted above can further be elaborated upon with reference to the study of the ND movement. Most academic studies on the ND movement have tended to underemphasize the operations of the lived ideology of the movement "in action" and to overemphasize the role of "important" texts and thinkers. This is probably because this is the easiest way to write a dissertation given the linguistic or personal limitations of the researchers involved. This in turn has led to the underemphasis of the "illocutionary" and "emotive" aspects of the movement's ideological languages and discourses combined with an overemphasis on their "propositional" and "referential" aspects. Instead of trying to understand these aspects together within the complex and contradictory field of ideological practice, this reductionist approach emphasizes only the "propositional" aspect therefore tending towards a "scientistic" and elitist conception of ideological practice and production.

This is probably the origin of such complaints to the effect that the Philippine radical movements have not contributed anything "original" to "world-class" Marxism, or that the ideological "backwardness" of the ND movement and its failure to "Gramscianize" or "Focauldianize" itself reflects its lack of "real" (preferably academic) intellectuals to guide it and to act as transmission belts for the latest trends which can be "applied" in the Philippines. In their individual works, Kathleen Weekley and Ben Reid's manifest exasperation in demonstrating what they claim to be the yawning gap between what the "texts" of the movement "prescribe" and the Philippine contemporary political, economical and social "realities" as they understand these from their Australian vantage point is symptomatic of the weaknesses of this kind of approach. Such studies inevitably lapse finally into simplistic accusations of either simple-mindedness if not stupidity (of the membership) or dogmatism of the leaders (considered to be a necessary corollary of their "Maoism"). Are 300-page dissertations really necessary in order to "prove" this prearranged conclusion?

The current sorry state of scholarship on the Philippine Left must be remedied. As one possible area of study, an actual empirical analysis of the minute aspects of the ideological discourses and languages of the ND movement at various levels and domains, including the implicit and explicit slippages, contestations, decontestations, and transformations of central ideological notions in "the thick of things" is yet to be undertaken. It is only with such studies that any real advance can be made in understanding the conditions of possibility and actual

persistence of the ND movement as a “political movement” proper. The principles Magno advanced in his essay not only provide some of the necessary methodological insights but also emphasize the necessary humility before practice that a researcher must possess in order to approach this subject properly. This is however, something that Magno himself obviously no longer has either the inclination or capacity to undertake. What great irony Magno must feel that he should at one time even be paraphrasing Bertolt Brecht as he does at the end of this essay! Today, he would probably relish Wolf Biermann’s quip that indeed it was a very great thing that Brecht became a communist, the tragedy is that he persevered in being one to the end.—**RAMON G. GUILLERMO**, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF FILIPINO AND PHILIPPINE LITERATURE, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN

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