

# CASE STUDY: ZOTO AND THE TWICE-TOLD STORY OF PHILIPPINE COMMUNITY ORGANIZING\*

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## Introduction

In the late 1960s, an intractable urban poor struggle for land conjoined with church-related efforts for more efficacious social organizing and the plunge of youthful and thoughtful activists from theory's heady heights to the sobering waters of praxis—to create a tapestry of community organizations and communities that now undergird and critique the Philippine left political landscape.

This case study focuses first on Zone One Tondo Organization, the famed ZOTO that rallied thousands of its people to its cause in the mid-1970s, moving from failure to strength then strength to weakness; and gently probes the complex interplay of events that account for ZOTO's later "silent" years. It also focuses on PECCO or Philippine Ecumenical Committee for Community Organization, harbinger of the gospel of community organizing or CO, initially a la Alinsky but also drinking from the wells of liberation theology and Marxist ideology, with compulsions from the latter driving the committee to its dissolution in 1976-1977.

Finally, this case study focuses on variations on the CO theme that have produced scores, probably hundreds, of throbbing, daring and defying communities that live the truth of people's participation and people's power in greater or lesser degree. In fact, the variations boil down to two basic molds: one strong on autonomy and self-organization, keeping the Alinsky emphasis, but lost in the larger maze of politics; the other infused by the dynamics of the national democratic struggle but weak in the basics of painstaking organizing.

This case study, studded with limitations, is offered in the faith that this particular CO tale presents a fuller and, infinitely richer picture of reality, tracing CO's advance on the tortuous path of development or, if you will, liberation.

## Zone One in Tondo Foreshoreland

Zone One is an estimated 56 hectares situated at the south end of Tondo Foreshoreland which is a narrow slip of landfill then estimated at 110 to 130 hectares reclaimed by government as part of a plan to expand and improve port facilities of Manila (see Appendix I). The people's own efforts have since added substantial sections to the land.

In the two decades following World War II, the steady stream of humanity that turned Tondo district into Southeast Asia's largest squatter colony included homeless war refugees from Manila and the south; victims of several metropolitan fires; and hundreds of families driven north yearly by job scarcity, rural dispossession, and low productivity.

Joblessness also confronts these ranks of rural migrants upon their arrival at Manila's ports and terminals, but it is mitigated by the odd jobs offered by the so-called informal sector of the economy: vending, scavenging, stevedoring, handicraft production. More regular income is derived from fishing and work in nearby slaughterhouses or factories but these are few and far between and only good for the day's labor.

Poverty brings in its train malnutrition, disease, illiteracy, prostitution, crime, and other social ills that constitute the reality of people's lives. Tondo had and still has the highest crime and disease rates in Metro Manila. Squatters—also known as urban poor—must scale down requirements to the barest minimum in choosing a place to stay: vacant land, a nearby source of water, employment within walking distance, and a school, at least a primary school, within the vicinity. By these standards, the normal comforts of city life translate into luxuries and are therefore expendable: security of domicile, electricity, plumbing, drainage, medical care, garbage disposal.

Since the 1950s, vote-rich Tondo had propelled many an aspiring lawyer into the city government and even Congress. In exchange for continued delivery of votes, the politician provided some measure of protection but failed to perform on the issue of land. Politicians, in fact, increasingly turned against the interests of the people by espousing anti-urban poor legislation couched in grandiose terms of "development". The people had the votes but money and largesse flowed from elsewhere; since money could secure votes, the people be damned. After years of relying on broker-politicians and laws that left them on the short end of development, the Tondo people realized they had only themselves to fall back on.

Tondo had literally become the dung heap of a society sharply divided into the haves who enjoyed political power, economic wealth, and cultural hegemony; and the have-nots existing on its fringes. Committed to a neo-colonial pattern of development that enriched foreign capital and its Filipino junior partners while impoverishing the many, the succession of Philippine governments did little and cared less for the growing numbers of marginalized people in the city and

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countryside.

Through two decades of neglect broken by an occasional legislative gesture, Tondo had become a juggernaut of social ills that seemingly defied all solutions. By this time, Philippine economic development had shifted away from import substitution to Marcos' vision of an export-oriented economy that would require heavy infrastructure of roads, bridges, airports, seaports—including the international port for containerized operations at North Harbor and fishport in adjoining Navotas that would rise on land once teeming with urban poor (see Appendix II).

There was only one sore point—the growing and contentious Zone One people's movement that was raising a different set of priorities. The government set out to deal with it in the only way it knew—top-down, through the technocratic doubletalk of national development or, failing that, brute force. Tondo Foreshoreland needed to be cleared for international shipping and if the Tondo people thought their shanties were more important than an international port, then bulldoze away!

But the Tondo Foreshoreland people would have no more of the political and economic equations that held them in sublime disregard. Their shanties and minuscule lots were more important than international ports and if the government could not guarantee and produce a viable alternative for life and livelihood, they would not budge.

In fact, the squatter problem could only be solved through "a complete revision of development priorities" for development policy in the Philippines had heretofore produced "poverty, urban migration, and slums" as a federation of urban poor organizations would later put it. But for the short and medium-term, ZOTO aimed simply to bend those priorities to people's need for living space.

This militance had not always existed. Tondo Foreshoreland occupants did not move beyond the level of small tenant associations until the mid-1950s with the founding of a federation shortly after the passage of Republic Act 1597 in 1956. The act ordered the survey and distribution of 115 hectares of Tondo Foreshoreland at low prices to its occupants, but its implementation could not be pushed by an association, that eventually foundered on disunity and complacency.

By the mid-1960s, demolitions had once more hit Tondo Foreshoreland, the victims hauled off to Sapang Palay 50 kilometers north of Manila and away from any form of livelihood. Eventually returning to Tondo, they saw the bigger structures untouched and claims on their lots staked out by police, bigwigs, land speculators, and political proteges.

Impelled by the need for a broader and stronger organization to negotiate for services and, more importantly, to press their claim for land, the various Tondo Foreshoreland associations banded together into the Council for Tondo Foreshoreland Community Organizations or CTFCO in 1968. But this unity was shortlived when CTFCO leaders sold out, while 5,000 members, mobilized for a march, were massed on Malacanang grounds. The leadership, not surprisingly all-male, had succumbed to the wining and dining of a yacht-owning cabinet member and had withdrawn the organization's demands.

It was a rude awakening—for the Tondo Foreshoreland people, particularly Zone One residents, who now felt the imperative of building a principled leadership and a strong base; and for Catholic and Protestant religious who had thus far placed their bets on CTFCO. The time had come for a thorough reassessment, a new strategy, a new way of community organizing.

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It is necessary to draw in larger strokes the situation in which all this was developing: inflation brought on by election overspending; increasing militarization; spiralling prices triggered by oil price hikes, and government policies that favored foreign capital and the elite—all serving to wreak havoc on the economy, bringing masses of people to the streets in protest.

At the root of these eye-catching headlines was the breaking down of ruling class consensus on two basic issues: an enhanced nationalist posture of independence over and against integration into the neo-capitalist world system; and maintenance of the fragile liberal democratic politics inherited from Mother America over and against institution of strong-arm rule that would carry out development from the top.

The radical youth movement had, since the middle 1960s,



most of the time in Tondo, any livable space becomes a home

consistently raised a critique of society beset by an unholy trinity of evils: imperialism, feudalism, and bureaucrat capitalism. Only this could provide a coherent framework within which to view the economic dispossession of the bottom and middle classes, growing political restiveness and a rightward drift manifested in rising military hegemony and the terror of private armies. The 1970s was a springtime for the radical movement whose analysis and inchoate political program drew adherents by the hundreds and thousands — students, youth, jeepney drivers, fish haulers, workers, and other urban poor, including Zone One's leaders.

The movement was later elaborated into a national democratic front (NDF) whose 10-point program sought to unite all marginalized classes and sectors of society—including minorities and southern Muslims in armed rebellion — against the US-backed Marcos regime and to later install a coalition government representative of these sectors. Drawing heavily from Marxist concepts and categories of analysis and inspired by the Chinese revolutionary strategy of encirclement of the cities from the countryside, the NDF early on regarded armed struggle as paramount.

On the other hand, Catholic social teaching and action had moved from the relief-rehabilitation mode to involvement in cooperatives, credit unions, and cottage industries as a more adequate response to the problem of institutionalized poverty and suffering. Deepening in the mid-1960s to involvement in peasant and workers unions, these efforts largely ended in defeat as in the Negros sugar cane workers strike, or in cooptation of leadership, as in the Federation of Free Farmers' Montemayor's rapprochement with Marcos, or the CTFCO sell-out. And though the NDF was sharpening its analysis and refining its program for change, it posed a broad strategy that did not answer the question of self-empowerment for communities, any community, short of armed struggle.

The ZOTO-PECCO experience brought together people committed to the NDF, including the best and brightest of a generation of student activists ready to tackle organizing; and people committed to grassroots organizing thence building up to the national level, including church religious and lay workers dissatisfied, if not disenchanted, with church social action. There was, of course, some overlap. Apart from this, the PECCO board brought together Catholic and Protestant religious and lay — men and women in nearly equal numbers — with experiences and expertise in fields ranging from sociology to trade unionism — who, together, helped nurture and steer the fledgling program. The board also provided invaluable links to academe and the churches that yielded not only material resources and theological undergirding, but also the cream from institutions as potential trainees.

All these, and an exceeding openness to the national democratic movement as it presented a defiant temper and revolutionary strategy against the Marcos regime, account in great measure for the success of ZOTO-PECCO's first five years.

This confluence of forces — urban poor community, radical movement, and progressive church religious — needed a fourth element to spark the undertaking. That element had its improbable origins in a second-generation American-Russian Jew who, by the time of his visit to Manila in the mid-1970s, had four decades of developing, practicing, and teaching the art of CO behind him.

Saul Alinsky's apprenticeship in trade union organizing provided the basis for the famed Chicago Back of the Yards campaign that forged a coalition of shop-owners, workers, union leaders, and churches. CO, as developed by Alinsky, rests on few key concepts including power through organization, conflict and its creative uses, and self-interest as a basis for

action and organization. (Appendix III presents CO principles and methodology largely elaborated and indigenized in the Philippine context.) The soundness of CO philosophy was affirmed by the successes which at that time filled three decades of organizing from New York City to California's Chicano communities.

Would the western CO transplant take root and flourish in Third World soil? Painfully aware that its best efforts yielded meager fruit in terms of strong, autonomous, and conscientized people's organizations, and not quite certain that the heat and fury of mass rallies and demonstrations would result in solid organizing efforts, the religious in Tondo were willing to try CO.

### ZOTO and PECCO

The twin births of ZOTO's precursor, Zone One Tondo Temporary Organization or ZOTTO, and PECCO in 1970 may be viewed against this broad backdrop. PECCO was to generate support for a CO training program that would backstop the community organizing in Zone One. The success of the venture would have an impact far beyond Tondo's dank corners, challenging the top-down technocratic approach to development with a people-centered model.

Sixty-four leaders and members from 20 organizations in seven communities founded ZOTTO and, in behalf of the people, invited PECCO to establish the two-year, two-pronged program to be headed by Herbert White, a Presbyterian minister and Alinsky trainee.

Four of the seven communities were contiguous: Kagitangan, Fugoso, North Harbor, and San Antonio. Three grew out of unlikely circumstances. Slip Zero, once a berth for barges (the numbered berths or slips serviced ships) had become a garbage dumping ground. Providing solid, if irregular, space, it eventually drew inhabitants who patiently added more garbage, as, for instance, broken glass and brick discards from neighboring San Miguel bottling plant. Thus, Slip Zero grew into a community that also produced a wisp of a leader, Trining Herrera who would eventually become one of ZOTO's mainstays.

*Isla Puting Bato* (White Stone Island) is a kilometer-long strip of land that grew from out of the shells and soil swept onshore by countless typhoons and monsoon winds. Also called *Islang Diablo* (Devil's Island), it attracted fugitive and fisherman alike including Leyte migrant David Balondo, who fished for ten years in Navotas before seeking out a place which would provide both domicile and livelihood. As the populace increased, the island divided into two communities: *Dulo Puting Bato* (White Stone End) and Luzviminda Village which, by 1975, was linked to the mainland. Early in the organizing effort, many of the island's devils — smugglers, kidnapers and their kind — turned their energies from crime to the land struggle.

In May 1971, ZOTTO would drop the T for temporary to formally organize itself as a community organization. (It is a CO tenet that an organization and its leaders pass an initial testing period before formalizing itself.) But these brief seven months of ZOTTO yielded a rich record of mobilizations and victories that gained it public recognition and legitimacy while scoring tangible victories, crucial requirements in the early stages of CO.

CO and its unorthodox, creative and effective methods that ranged from conflict-confrontation to negotiation; and a strong and united ZOTO leadership determined to win its just demands for services and eventually, the land, was an unstoppable partnership that drove ZOTO to the crest of success on through the early years of martial law.

## Recognition and the Flexing of Muscles

ZOTTO quickly proved its competence and credibility by mobilizing its organizational network for speedy distribution of relief goods and negotiation of \$10,000 for galvanized iron sheets for 2,000 families whose homes were devastated by a typhoon (in contrast, government relief agencies met chaos with chaos), thus earning the right to deal directly with relief agencies for disaster aid.

A second breakthrough was its official welcome of Pope Paul VI in behalf of Manila's poor, overcoming peremptory rejection by church hierarchy and signalling the start of adversary relations with the Cardinal of Manila. Herrera told the Pope before an audience of thousands of the empty promises peddled them "from administration to administration" and asked for his blessing on their struggle for land. Smarting from the embarrassment of ZOTTO's papal audience, the Cardinal announced a large-scale housing project for the area, drawing a stinging response from ZOTTO: it was land – not houses – they needed, and such gross misjudgment was possible only because they were excluded from the planning process.

A 300-person picket on Church World Service for refusal to recognize ZOTTO in matters of relief aid was soon followed by a 2,000-strong rally in Congress against a two-faced Tondo congressman; a procession in protest of the illegal encroachment of San Miguel on Slip Zero territory; and the occupation of the old Parola compound of the Bureau of Public Works – these are examples of ZOTTO-led mass actions. The last is a classic case of a people prevailing over development schemes that would victimize them. In 1970, hundreds of homes were targeted to give way to public works projects, but promises of relocation did not dispel the fears of residents, heightened by the secret construction of a warehouse on BPW land they had been eyeing for occupation. When their importunings proved to no avail, 400 families stormed the compound and set up their assorted shanties, thus staking their claim on the land. Bonifacio Village, named after a Tondo revolutionary hero, grew out of that occupation – the eighth and youngest among ZOTTO's member-communities and a model in community zoning and self-help housing.

The success of these mass actions lay as much in careful and patient internal organization evident in committee work, seminars on issues and problems, including 40 seminars in preparation for the convention, and in the convention itself. Seven hundred twenty-five delegates representing 53 organizations and 20,000 members gathered for Tondo's first exercise in genuine representative democracy. Vibrancy, discipline, and quality of discussions characterized the gathering, indicating that the democratic homework was being done. Among the many resolutions passed, one asked the media to use "Tondo people" in place of such put-down terms as "squatters" and "Tondo Folk", reflective of the shift in consciousness and action from object to subject.

The 15-month period leading to martial rule moved at the same action-filled pace: regular mobilizations; formation of a support group (*Mga Kaibigan ng ZOTO* or MKZ); a second convention attended by 1,400 people; and support action for victims of the disastrous Central Luzon floods. The major struggles of this period manifest resiliency and persistence as in the four-month campaign to halt building construction on public land pinpointed by ZOTO for relocation. Street plays and teach-ins also point to the growing linkage with the youth movement and, by extension, the national democratic movement.

The Cardinal of Manila had slept for a year on the Pope's promise of church support for the Tondo people's land struggle. To refresh his memory, ten busloads of people came for a visit, specifically pressing for funds for a land titling office.

When this and a subsequent protest mass failed to move the Cardinal, several leaders confronted him at a Christmas midnight mass, only to earn an overnight stay in jail for their efforts.

Another struggle concerned the shady lease of seven hectares in Luzviminda Village to the Cement Association of the Philippines (CAP). When a 3-day picket and a 3,000-strong march on CAP's plush Makati office only ended in a run-around from the association, ZOTO decided to enlarge the issue to the question of port development at the expense of the urban poor dwellers so as to confront the German embassy and corporation that would finance the project (to the tune of \$12 M) with their complicity, witting or unwitting, in the matter. At the same time, ZOTO launched "Operation Hello" with the help of student mass organizations that kept CAP's telephones tied for the whole week, paralyzing operations and forcing CAP to withdraw its plans for Luzviminda Village.

## People's Power On Through Martial Law

The September 1972 declaration of martial law froze most progressive organizations into near-inactivity. ZOTO was jolted back to reality by a raid on its offices and arrests of leaders, members and foreign trainees; and the subsequent demolition of homes at the rate of fifty a day. Through combined efforts of leadership and its allies – including a high-ranking bishop – a meeting with top government authorities yielded major concessions including a halt to demolitions two weeks after they began. Three months later, dire warnings of another round of demolitions were met by a quick and forceful response: a 1,000-strong march which was, however, aborted by military at Slip Zero. Although ZOTO thought that "the activity was a significant exercise in futility", its deeper value was that ZOTO had once more found its feet, earning the grudging respect of all – including the national democratic movement – for speaking out, standing up, and marching; in short, for not playing by the rules of the new military dispensation. More than that, ZOTO maintained its area meetings and general assemblies, a phenomenon in those early years of martial rule.

Ironically enough, it was during this period that Marcos first offered Navotas relocation as an alternative to RA 1597, a proposal that came from ZOTO in the first place. Relocation had moved from possibility to bona fide option; option to reality would take another six years, but for the moment, that was good enough. Buoyed by these developments, ZOTO once more met in convention.

In early 1974, the *Ugnayan ng mga Samahan ng Mamamayan sa Tondo Foreshoreland* (Federation of Community Organizations of Tondo Foreshoreland or *Ugnayan* for short) created a Citizens Committee to monitor and work with the Tondo Foreshoreland Urban Renewal Project Team of the government. The committee undertook a socio-economic survey of over 2,500 households in preparation for relocation, dialogued with a World Bank mission, and drew up a position paper on the Tondo Foreshoreland problem.

The committee's premature abolition and the prospect of unilateral government disposition over the problem prompted *Ugnayan* to launch an *Alay Lakad* (Walk in Offering for One's Neighbor) to Malacanang. Although the 5,000 marchers were blocked at the foot of a bridge, six leaders were allowed to proceed. At Malacanang, they parried the President's jabs with grace and humor, upheld their people's right to land and livelihood, won their major demands including a stop to demolitions until a relocation site was ready, pinned the President to a written pledge, and, on the whole, carried the 45-minute discussion with the aplomb and dignity of people who knew their worth. Besides Herrera, ZOTO was represented by Fred

Repuno, who had the talent for raising the sharpest questions. Four years of smaller confrontations and negotiations had made these "squatters" fitting adversary to the ruler of the land. As a news report put it, the most important achievement was "the establishment of the legality, power, credibility, daring and leadership of community organization of Tondo Foreshoreland without a show or threat of violence . . .". Smaller issues to larger ones, minor victories to bigger triumphs — this was another key principle of CO.

Soon after, the people congregated to give thanks for their victory. At the Thanksgiving Mass, the Italian parish priest spoke on the "truths of God's kingdom hidden from the worldly-wise and prudent, but revealed to the poor and oppressed". A touching array made up the offertory: one of the kits conscientizing the people on the struggle, biscuits that helped stave off hunger, medicine to sustain the faint-hearted, ropes which helped ensure a peaceful and orderly march, a megaphone which kept people abreast of developments, a guitar . . . and finally, a handful of land — center of the 17-year old struggle. A marker was also unveiled to mark the historic march as a "milestone towards the formulation of urban land reform policy" and to affirm government — particularly the President's — recognition of the principle of people's participation in planning and decision-making.

This victory gave the push to a technical seminar whose basic objective was to inform the people of the various options considered by the Tondo Foreshoreland Development Authority (TFDA) and their respective merits (Appendix II presents one of three options). The gap between people and planners had to be bridged if people's participation was not to remain a bureaucratic shibboleth. In lengthy discussions, participants struck a consensus on such sensitive and fundamental questions as land ownership and payments, who should remain and who should be relocated, housing models to be preferred, social services to be upgraded in the interim. The seminar underscored the truism that technology, to be truly in the service of people, must first of all be understood by people. Equipped with an understanding of basic concepts, they could more easily cut through high-flown language that veiled the elitist ethos of most development schemes.

Having taken on church hierarchy, international relief agencies, and martial law high command, ZOTO faced one more rampart: the World Bank that was coordinating the funding of the international port. In fact, ZOTO had met with bank representatives in 1973 and 1974 (employing ingenuity and one-upmanship to outmaneuver government agencies) but tentative pledges of support for the people's position had to be firmed up through concrete agreements.

In a series of three meetings in February 1975, representatives of *Ugnayan*, World Bank, and TFDA arrived at a consensus whose basic features were maximum retention, development of 430 hectares of land in Dagat-dagatan for relocation, improvement of infrastructure and services in the interim, and urban upgrading rather than urban renewal. The last point was crucial because it spelled the difference between large-scale and selective demolition.

### Repression and Arrests

Starting in the early 1970s, arrests were an occupational hazard for ZOTO's leadership, usually brief and as deterrent to public protest. By mid-1970s, they had taken on a more deliberate and systematic character. In the face of another round of demolitions prompted by new presidential decrees against the urban poor, an alliance sought an audience with Metro Manila governor Imelda Marcos, the same First Lady who has sworn to beautify Metro Manila by ridding it of its

eyesores, including slums and their dwellers. Less than 24 hours after the meeting, alliance leaders were arrested. For over a month ZOTO was under the *zona* or dawn raids by military to flush out criminals and suspected "subversives" in pinpointed areas. ZOTO's top 20 leaders were on the list and almost all were arrested over a period of time.

In 1975, Presidential Decree 814 offered squatters and would-be relocatees the right to leasehold of 25 years of lands they occupied, renewable for another 25 years with option to purchase at market value after five years. Land cost was pegged at 95 centavos per square meter with a cost of development fee to be determined later. Leaflets distributed in 1976-77 attacked the decree for leaving the urban poor open to the dangers of demolition, while prohibitive charges kept the land out of their reach. A road reblocking scheme would cut through homes; affected residents were offered compensation but the scheme was attacked on similar grounds.

In October 1976, ZOTO decided not to join a multi-sectoral rally, pleading a lack of knowledge on the issues involved. There was a last-minute turn-about in the decision that remains unclear to this day, and ZOTO was among the 4,000 drawn to this anti-martial law action. A month later, ZOTO joined a 300-person delegation to a church center on the promise of Christmas gift distribution, only to learn that the mobilization was on another issue.

As 1976 wore on to 1977, repression was stepped up through violent dispersal of large mobilizations and waves of arrests in the Tondo area and the fielding of informers. Membership and some of the leaders fell off, not fully understanding or accepting, the plunge into mass actions on national issues at the sacrifice of their own issues. Moreover, they were not ready for the harsh reprisals and were, therefore, intimidated into inaction. At the same time, they took PD 814 as an earnest gesture of government towards realization of the relocation alternative and could not comprehend or accept its outright rejection by some of the leadership.

Arrested in 1977 and released after tremendous international pressure, Herrera was too shattered by the experience to take hold of the organization that had all but fallen apart. On the other hand, she was used by government housing authorities to project a *modus vivendi* between urban poor and government. This so demoralized allies and people outside Manila that Balondo was fielded to the provinces with the message that ZOTO had not sold out. Although the government had made political mileage out of her conciliatory stance, sympathetic critics felt it justified to protect organizational gains of the past.

By 1979, demolitions were renewed and prevailed over human barricades. Resistance largely came from those who faced transfer to the more distant relocation centers. From then on to the early 1980s, over a third of the 37,000 families (1978 estimate) in Zone One had been relocated, the majority to Dagat-dagatan and Dasmariñas, Cavite.

### Achievements and the Present

Scores of huge container vans now fill the international port and back-up areas where the communities of Dulo Puting Bato, Luzviminda Village, Bonifacio Village and Slip Zero once stood. The borders of Kagitingan have given way to roads and commercial space. More homes in Tondo Foreshoreland will be displaced once the radial roads are built.

While the base ZOTO organization remains in Zone One, ZOTO branches have sprung up in the relocation areas and are carrying the fight for basic services and the protest against anti-urban poor legislation, very much along the lines of CO. There are regular meetings and seminars in Zone One for business and study. There are mobilizations on such issues as PD

772 which makes squatting a crime, and the government's Flexihomes which are highly priced, poorly built, and aesthetically offensive. But the internal-weaknesses of the late 1970s have been carried over to the 1980s and have not been fully resolved, as manifested in the overstaying power of leadership, the lack of a strong second line, and the apparent drying up of financial resources.

Since the field of investigation had to shift to the second-generation CO models and organizations, there had been no deep inquiry into ZOTO in its current state.

How do we sum up ZOTO's achievements? A 1980 gathering of people variously involved in ZOTO attempted to evaluate its first ten years of existence. ZOTO's achievements, the group observed, included the self-worth and dignity that replaced a sense of worthlessness on the part of Tondo people; organization building and strengthening and internalization of the concept of power; and, finally, the "substantial victory" of keeping one's lot in Tondo or winning in-city relocation to Dagat-dagatan. The latter was grudgingly accepted by the people as fruit, albeit delayed, of the struggle of the 1970s.

### PECCO Split and ZOTO's Decline

It is necessary to backtrack at this point and note that although PECCO training in Tondo had ended by 1972, a number of centers had grown in and outside Manila that required its administration and coordination. ZOTO, for its part, undertook a modified training program to equip local leaders with CO skills.

The PECCO board's decision in 1976 to dissolve the program was precipitated by deeper ideological differences. A brief critique of CO was making the rounds of Manila, prompting a top-level PECCO staff meeting at which a proposal to relate with a particular political tendency was voted down in favor of a "no links" policy. Most of the staff felt that the choice of a political party must not be pre-empted from the people who would make the option upon developing political maturity.

The question of political options was primarily pushed by a critique of CO as inveterately reformist, enamored with small victories, and gripped by a narrow empiricism that could not look beyond canals and pathways. It did not address the question of "power for what?" and its piecemeal approach to change was a dead-end, possibly counter-revolutionary, for it posed no vision of an alternative future. Hence the imperative to link up with the larger movement and to yield to the latter's imperatives, not necessarily identical with those of the organization. This, according to the critique, was the only way to break CO's splendid isolation and infuse it with the dynamics of the revolutionary struggle.

The split had dire consequences for ZOTO for the presence of a board and Manila staff had helped backstop its organizing efforts. PECCO's dissolution had broken the combination of influences that had heretofore fed and nourished the organizing effort; it also brought the ZOTO leadership more squarely within the national democratic stream.

The ten-year summation points to a number of factors underlying ZOTO's decline. One centers on the exigencies of a training-focused program and the desire for "fast organizing" that fails to fully develop decision-making processes at all levels and neglects the building up of second-line leadership exacerbated by the split.

The second factor concerns the "confusion of roles" between leader and organizer, particularly in regard to the local CO program. CO sharply differentiates between leader and organizer, the latter being teacher and technician rather than front-liner. The organizing program phases out

upon reaching a certain level of maturity to ensure that a paid bureaucracy that will perpetuate itself is not created. A leader, on the other hand, is responsible for decision-making and internal and external activities of the organization. The local CO program blurred this distinction; leadership prerogatives were assumed by organizers, some of them leaders in their own right. Thus "some leaders of ZOTO did not know how to deal with the local COs".

The third factor focuses on ideology — enriching and yet limiting, unifying but also dividing. At the onset of organizing, most community organizers were united in their analysis and a program broadly defined as "organizing people for power". By mid-1970, this was challenged as short-sighted and many among PECCO's Manila staff were pressing for a clear avowal of national democracy and all it stood for. At that 1980 review, it was felt that ideology's positive contribution lay in the broader perspective and clear direction it lent to the people's struggle.

On the other hand, creative strategizing and tacticizing were hindered by preoccupation with "broader perspective actions"; and an ideological position unclear to many members blocked the wider processes of decision-making. Finally, ZOTO could not cope with the crisis resulting from an open mass organization taking on some features of an underground operation. Basic organizing principles were violated, decisions were handed down from the top, and "little by little (the members) lost interest. . .".

This precisely provoked repression in the form of mass arrests in 1977 onward; leaders were jailed or forced into hiding; members became scared, confused and apathetic. The PECCO split further weakened the organization because of the "pull-out of workers and consultants".

Finally, growing government sophistication in dealing with the problem through a carrot-and-stick policy dictated a sophistication and flexibility that ZOTO leadership's "intransigent posture" could not provide. While reblocking, increased social services, and Dagat-dagatan did not meet the people's demands one hundred percent, CO precisely meant getting what you could and using that as leverage for future struggles. ZOTO's hardline all-or-nothing approach became incomprehensible to many of its members.

This dogmatism sprung largely from a fear that to receive government largesse was to sell one's soul, or to sell the revolution short, especially with the First Lady as benefactress. As Metro Manila governor, she had visions of building a "City of Man" of which Dagat-dagatan would be part. To move from conflict-confrontation to negotiation — without feeling compromised or collaborationist — required a degree of political and organizational maturity neither ZOTO nor its leadership fully had.

### Ideology and Variations on the CO Theme

The ten-year summation ends with questions on the relation between CO and ideology, on developing ideological sophistication among the people, and enhancing free choice of ideological options. Finally it asks: Given the present political situation, is CO as developed in Tondo still effective? What are the alternatives?

The community organizing and training that proceeded from the 1976 split exhibit varying sensitivity to the issue of CO and ideology. At this point, other elements had infused and enriched CO philosophy and practice, according to Fernando Yusingo, then Redemptorist priest and first and only PECCO national training director whose singular obsession with CO has left its clear imprint on one stream of the CO family. These elements include Freire, his emphasis on cultural liberation and insistence on a people freeing them-

selves; liberation theology and the dialectic of changing both system and people; and the left and its Marxist categories of analysis.

The basic modes dominate the seeming spectrum of models that has emerged since then. One is classical Alinsky indigenized in the Philippine context — affirming the long, slow process of building up a people's capacity for power, starting with local issues immediately perceptible and actionable. Heavily influenced by the philosophy of anarchism that posits free self-governing communities over and against a centralized and ultimately coercive state, this model does not confront the imperative of a national and coordinated movement with a clearly drawn-out program, strategy and tactics. Its ultimate vision of a proliferation of self-determining communities, hazy and gap-filled, glosses over realpolitik and is not able to command the passions and zeal of adherents in the way the national democratic movement does.

The latter posits a struggle led by an underground and highly disciplined Marxist-Leninist party whose select membership consists of dedicated and professional revolutionaries. Armed struggle in the countryside is the basic form of struggle to which other forms are auxiliary. Mass organizations such as unions, peasant groups, and community organizations are greatly subordinated to the imperatives of armed struggle. Hence, a de-emphasis on organizational autonomy and laborious step-by-step organizing; and a corresponding focus on propaganda and alliance-building. There is room for alliances even with liberal reformists on the issue of dismantling the dictatorship, but the unveiled premise is the primacy of armed struggle.

Granting variations on these two modes, the development of community organizing in the Philippines can be viewed from this background.

COPE. Prime example of the first mode of CO, COPE (Community Organization of the Philippines Enterprise) peaked with 11 centers in 1979 but now concentrates on five, losing the others for reasons of personnel and technical problems and militarization. It currently faces internal problems (e.g. "bored out" as a variation on "burnt out") that relate to the challenges of sharpening its analysis and elaborating a political program of action. It seems ready to break out of a political horizontalism and enter into alliances that can inject the dynamics of a regional, or even national, movement. Its rich organizing and training experiences of the past decade can provide the basis for further refining its CO technology. Two of its more outstanding stories are Bukidnon organizing (fully documented until 1979 in "Kagawasan — A True Story") and a recent victory at Infanta, Bukidnon, which was started in 1974 by two women fresh out of college who wanted to prove that CO could succeed in a non-urban, non-macho mold. After a year of confrontations and mobilizations, over 300 farmers formed a confederation that carried the struggle for land ownership to the limits allowed by militarization. They were up against plans to convert their farms into part of a huge sugar plantation. The parish priest was murdered, many fled, and activities largely took the form of coop-type ventures. But CO had taught the farmers to deal with forces of the right and left in a more organized way. Some joined the New People's Army as a higher form of understanding and acting on the problem, while others were courageous enough to speak out against its misdeeds. Kibawe is instructive on the limits of open legal organizing in a highly polarized situation. A more recent success has been the awarding of a concession to gather bangus (milkfish) fry to 800 bangus fry gatherers from eight villages in Infanta after two mobilizations in two weeks. This will bring them a gross income of P2-3 million yearly, out of which they are to pay P164,000 for license fee. Through traditional middlemen, they would get only a fraction of what they now hope

to earn. Earlier, left activists had said that that victory could not be won.

ACES. A mutant from the same mode is the Agency for Community Educational Services or ACES which has operated in northern and central Luzon, developing a two-pronged strategy of pressure politics and development of economic resource base. The latter aims to develop appropriate technology for continued sustenance and self-empowerment, producing an alternative to the dominant technology that can be another form of enslavement. Its four-year program among 2,000 farmers' households has reached a level of stability, but friendly critics point to the danger of over-focusing on the economic and avoiding pressure politics because that takes a heavy toll on emotions and energies. Moreover, it has suffered from ultra-democracy and a consensualism on everything from strategy and tactics to salaries. Nevertheless, its novel approach can make a contribution to the development of CO in the country. Started as an attempt at non-church based organizing, it has drawn initial sustenance from action-research contracts but may eventually have to fall back on church-related agencies.

NIA. Unique in the CO family is the 8-year old CO program of the National Irrigation Administration, launched on the failures of past government projects cut along the top-down model. Its initial irrigation project among 1,000 farmers in Central Luzon proved that people's participation is the key to effective irrigation projects. People, their conscientization and organization — and not the project — must be the starting point of development. Heavy emphasis on education linking local issues to systemic analysis and the transfer of organizing skills to farmers have paid off in dividends of people's assertiveness and project viability. The farmers secured most of the materials, provided basic labor, and designed a payment scheme that became a model for other communities. The organizing dimension has since been built into other NIA projects, but its impact may have been diluted by bureaucratic resistance and the absence of specific factors that optimized chances for success of the first venture. Finally, that effort was championed by a top ranking NIA official who may be losing his influence within, making authentic CO within government programs a fortuitous exception rather than the stolid norm. (This survey does not include government programs that have appropriated elements of CO as a method of cooptation.)

PEACE. Philippine Ecumenical Action for Community Enlightenment, an offspring of the PECCO split, was started as a response of progressive non-Roman Catholics to the situation of growing poverty and powerlessness of the people. Translating the logic of a semi-feudal analysis of society into rural organizing, it has 20 centers with an average staff of ten spread over the country, engaged in issues that range from prohibitive fertilizer costs and grain underpricing to pollution, the land struggle, militarization, human rights, and US bases. It has scored many victories such as the reduction of milling charges by four village organizations through a six-week boycott of abaca mills. It lays emphasis on alliance-building within and across sectors and launches mass mobilizations and propaganda campaigns on regional and strategic issues. Its training-organizing program has such specific characteristics as "silent, not proclaimed" organizing through core groups and organizing committees, sectoral organizing, volunteer organizers, and financial autonomy of local centers. It is beset by external constraints such as militarization and internal weaknesses as the lack of leaders to lead sectoral struggles and lack of management skills on the part of beneficiaries so that farmers' advocates still speak in behalf of farmers and organizers still run economic projects. Moreover, the CO experience has

not been made to bear on Protestant institutional and congregational life, in contrast to the appropriation of CO and its derivatives by a number of Catholic parishes and programs.

**BCC-CO.** In the shorthand of activist lingo, the six-year old phenomenon of Basic Christian Communities-CO has brought together the faith dimension lacking in CO's highly secular ethos — and the justice, or, if you will, ideological dimension that BCCs of the past had studiously avoided. Emerging in the late 1960s from similar impulses that fed Latin America's basic ecclesiastical communities — increasing lay participation and linking faith to action — BCCs in the country followed either the earlier liturgical model or the later developmental thrust, forming cooperatives or credit unions and undertaking socio-economic projects. At their best, the latter provided alternatives to elements of capitalist enterprise; but ultimately they “were mere palliatives which failed to strike directly at the root of the social ill”. Impelled by deepening social contradictions and inspired by the early success of CO, catechists and CO practitioners came together in 1977 in what would be the start of a joint enterprise based on the peasant organizing program of the National Secretariat of Social Action. BCC-CO is strong on social investigation, structural analysis, and deeper ideological discussion, apart from the faith dimension. Recent reports put its reach at 2,000 communities throughout the country, but its organizational outlines and theological understanding lack the sharpness of its Latin American namesake. One critic scores its CO component as too watered-down, starting from the theoretical, rather than the experiential pole and generating the usual rally-protest-picket response, rather than more innovative action that can slowly build organizational strength. Merely diffusing consciousness can provoke premature reaction from the state, rendering CO ineffective or academic in a quickly polarized situation.

**TOMANA.** ZOTO's struggle won land from the government and housing assistance of \$1 million from a German agency administered through the Tondo-Malabon-Navotas (TOMANA) housing assistance project beginning in 1982. By the end of 1984, it will have provided housing materials ranging in value from P750 to P3,500 to about 4,000 families who are the “poorest of the poor” in the three above-mentioned communities. A recent evaluation of the program credits it with having succeeded in its specific objective of meeting housing needs. However, it has fallen short of the other objective of facilitating the “organizing and training of people” for self-reliance and participation in the program, raising doubts on whether housing is a valid point of entry for organizing. As one leader observed, “We had ZOTO with no housing assistance. Housing should not be the basic objective; the real issue should be the basic objective. Otherwise those excluded from the benefits would leave.” The evaluation report noted the “dole-out” tendency or dependency generated by the program and recommended a fundamental redirection towards organizing, rather than housing, as the center of the program. A combination of factors account for this weakness: apathy and lack of political motivation among the “poorest of the poor”; the glossing over ZOTO's debilitated state at the onset of the program; and the sheer magnitude of the program that sometimes overwhelmed an inexperienced staff and people with little or no competencies for the tasks involved. To everyone's credit, the challenge of learning on-the-job was adequately met. To avoid past pitfalls, the redirection must seriously address itself to these problems including bureaucracy — a paid staff assuming undue responsibility for the program, implying some measure of default at the board level.

TOMANA has raised afresh the debate over whether

organizing should be around projects or around issues. Two other housing ventures may provide a study in contrasts.

**Pagtambayayong** (mutual help) in Cebu was developed as a housing cooperative to meet the land and housing needs of middle class (community organizers and development workers), low-income and squatter families. Resources were pooled or secured to purchase cheap land, and loans were negotiated for low-cost, low-energy housing, using appropriate technology. An external compulsion was the government's Zone Improvement Program, which would push land costs beyond the reach of low and middle-income people. Employing such CO principles as collective action and negotiations, the venture seems to be succeeding on its own terms.

Housing within a strong organizing context is manifested in a 6½-year old CO program in Bicol, south of Manila. Two years of basic organizing were undertaken by a three-person team among nine communities with over 500 families whose main livelihood is farming and work in abaca (hemp) plantations. Rejecting the tactic of confrontation as not apropos for soft-spoken Bicolanos, they undertook small projects such as a community store and collective farming. Seeking assistance for new homes that their marginal earnings can never provide, they received a P260,000 grant and maximized the benefits to the communities by providing labor and procuring timber from nearby forests, turning down the plywood-and-cement model of a draftsman. Only P11,000 was spent outside the communities for galvanized iron and nails. At one point the project was halted to get at the root of complaints that the project discriminated against members by also benefiting non-members. After six months of discussions, they affirmed the earlier decision of responding to the neediest among them, members and non-members alike, and building resumed. When a 1981 typhoon devastated their communities, the funding agency offered a second grant. Again they discussed for two days, said no, gathered material from the wrecked homes which, together with unused building material for the last 60 units, they then used to build 2,000 homes in two months. There are many vignettes on how they faced up to the mayor and the military; how they dealt with cheating within and theft by a neighboring community in their best non-abrasive non-Alinsky style; how bible study yielded startling and simple insights. But one tale must be told: of how they gave up five hectares of timberland for a communal farm because they could not convince the 15 tenant families of an absentee landlord to join their struggle for the land. Their development could not proceed from the eviction of these families. A whole case study in itself, this CO program had, in its first five years, the benefit of guidance from a gentle nun, erstwhile PECCO board member.

And so we turn full circle in this survey of second generation ZOTO-PECCO with some closing observations.

### CO vis-a-vis Political Scenarios

A group of community organizers has been meeting in the past year to evaluate the CO experience in the country. On balance, they say, organizing has empowered people on a micro-level; developed an awareness of democratic processes; offered alternative actions for people's organizations; and brought about personal transformation as in the sense of collectivity and commitment.

On the other hand, the group noted, while CO has achieved substantial impact on local levels, it had had minimal national impact and secured only peripheral and specific government policy changes. Addressing the two main streams of CO, the group observed that those with basic social analysis and the outlines of an alternative society tended to practices



that alienated the core group from the mass membership, while those who stress "process and people's power" found it difficult to rise above the level of issues and grapple with root causes of social contradictions.

Clearly the weakness of one is the other's strength and the two streams must learn to conjoin once more, or at least to learn from each other. Only then can the communities organized by CO become a mass base or a political constituency that can articulate and press for its objectives on a national level.

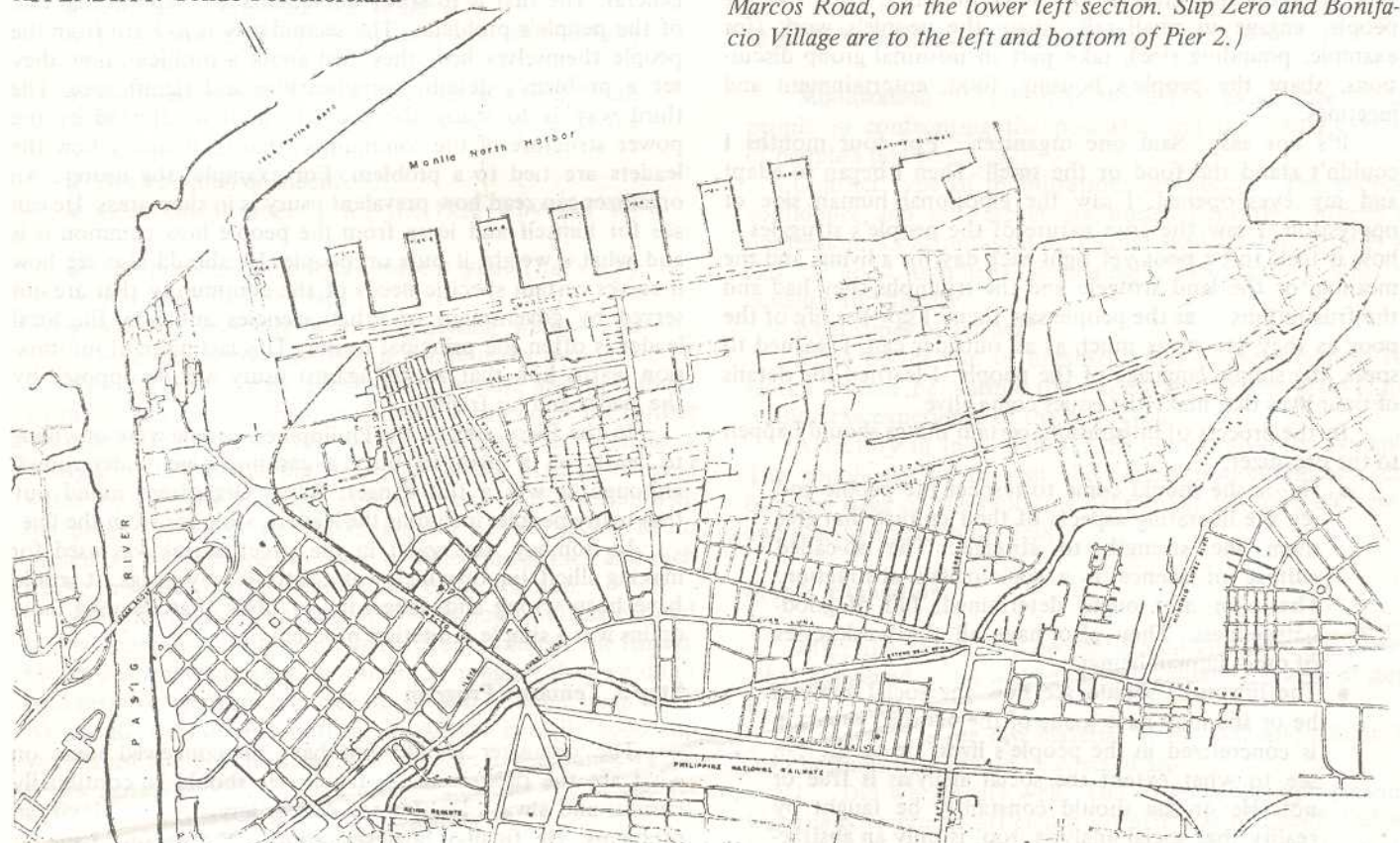
The current political situation could move into either of two scenarios: collapse of the regime and coming to power of a left-based coalition; or a prolonged ruling class consolidation of power, with or, more likely, without Marcos. If it is a quick victory, the task of building genuine people's organizations will have to be addressed so that the revolutionary government can carry out wide-ranging transformation with the people,

as in China and Cuba, and not against them, as in Poland or in latter stages of the Russian revolution. If it is ruling class consolidation, communities will all the more have to relearn the basics of people's participation and people's power to survive repression and sustain the long struggle ahead.

### Conclusion

This case study of ZOTO and, to a lesser extent, PECCO, is instructive on the limits and strengths of community organizing and on the various challenges it faces. A second generation of models and organizations has sprung from the seeds sown by the ZOTO-PECCO partnership. But CO can only come into full fruition and create a national impact if it can keep the tension between micro-organizing and macro-politics and develop the numbers and structures for a democratic base that will serve the revolution now and long afterward.

### APPENDIX I. Tondo Foreshoreland

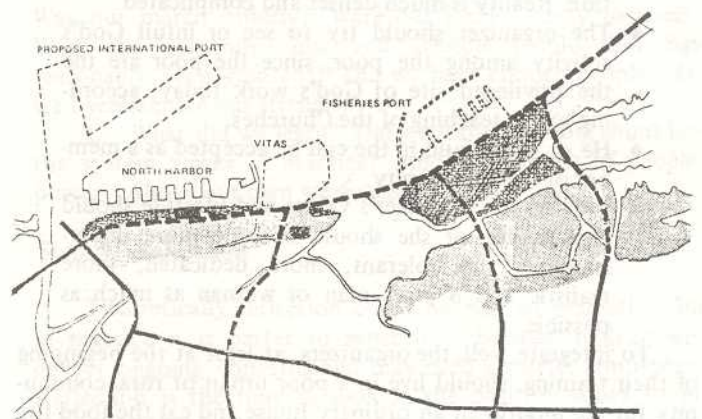


(Zone One is bordered by CM Recto Ave., Moriones and Marcos Road, on the lower left section. Slip Zero and Bonifacio Village are to the left and bottom of Pier 2.)

### APPENDIX II.

Under Alternative B, 57% of the area will be developed as a residential community for approximately 9,100 families. About 25% of the land will be devoted to industrial and commercial uses. These will be located between the Roxas Boulevard Extension and the Port Zone. In this scheme, about 17,000 families will have to be resettled in the Dagat-dagatan Area requiring 152 hectares of land. The remaining area of 163 hectares will be developed for commercial and industrial purposes.

(one of three government options to Tondo Foreshoreland. Note international port displacing Isla Puting Bato and other communities; and the gray mass on the right which is Dagat-dagatan to be reclaimed from fishponds.)



#### LEGEND:

RESIDENTIAL    COMMERCIAL    INDUSTRIAL

## APPENDIX III

### How to build people's organizations

[During March, some 30 community organizers from nearly all the countries of Asia gathered for a training program in Manila. The meeting was organized by the Asian Committee for People's Organization, an ecumenical group formed by the Christian Conference of Asia-Urban Rural Mission Office and the Office for Human Development of the Asian Bishops. We publish here the ten steps for organizing poor people that were presented at the meeting.]

#### Step I. Integration

The first and basic step in community organizing is integration or becoming one with the poor in their community. The organizers try to immerse themselves in the poor community to get to know the culture, economy, leaders, history, rhythms and lifestyle of the community. They visit the people, engage in small talk, share the people's work (for example, pounding rice), take part in informal group discussions, share the people's housing, food, entertainment and meetings.

It's not easy. Said one organizer, "For four months I couldn't stand the food or the smell. Then I began to adapt and my eyes opened. I saw the emotional human side of oppression. I saw the true nature of the people's struggles — how it feels to be poor yet fight each day for a living, and the meaning of the land struggle and the triumphs they had and the frustrations — as the people saw them. I saw the life of the poor as they see it, as much as an outsider can. I learned to speak the simple language of the people. I learned the details of their lives that make the issues come alive."

In the process of integration, certain things should happen to the organizer:

- He or she should come to respect the people and see the liberating aspects of their culture that give them the strength to struggle. The so-called culture of silence is a sociologist's abstraction. The poor are tough, determined, full of good-naturedness. They also have all the weaknesses of other human beings.
- The organizer should see how the social analysis he or she may have made of the national situation is concretized in the people's lives. He or she can see to what extent the social analysis is true or not. He or she should constantly be taught by reality that social analysis, too, is only an abstraction. Reality is much denser and complicated.
- The organizer should try to see or intuit God's activity among the poor, since the poor are the the privileged site of God's work today, according to the teaching of the Churches.
- He or she should in the end be accepted as a member of the community.
- Finally, the organizer's values and lifestyle should change. He or she should become more understanding and tolerant, more dedicated, more realistic and a poor man or woman as much as possible.

To integrate well, the organizers, at least at the beginning of their training, should live in a poor urban or rural community for six months in an ordinary house and eat the food the people eat.

Integration guarantees that a person's commitment to change society is attuned to what the *people* want by way of change and not to some theoretical model or ideology or

religion.

Integration is basic to all the other steps. If the organizers are not one with the people, they can never really learn the true dimensions of the people's problems or how to motivate them to change.

#### Step 2. Social Investigation

Social investigation is the process of systematically looking for issues to organize the people around. The organizer, immersed in the community, looks for problems that the people feel strongly about to the extent that they will act on them.

He or she looks for something concrete, for example, water and latrine problems, that are *objectively* problems (that is, obvious to all, visitors as well as people) and *felt* to be problems by the people. The two are not always the same.

How to do social investigation? There are three ways in general: The first is to study documents and reports that talk of the people's problems. The second way is to learn from the people themselves how they feel about a problem, how they see a problem's details, complications and significance. The third way is to study the problem as it is affected by the power structure of the community, that is, to study how the leaders are tied to a problem. For example, the usurer: An organizer can read how prevalent usury is in slum areas. He can see for himself and learn from the people how common it is and what a weight it puts on people. He should also see how it serves certain specific needs of the community that are not served by government or other agencies and how the local leader is often the principal usurer. This last piece of information warns him that action against usury will be opposed by the leader and his friends.

In the Bicol area of the Philippines, people were unwilling to work on a plan to bury a gasoline pipe underground, although it was a fire danger. Why? Organizers found out that many people, including the leaders, stole gas from the line.

In Bombay, the water in the street drains was used for making illicit liquor which was controlled by gangs. It would have been wrong and dangerous to think that cleaning these drains was a simple sanitation problem.

#### Step 3. Tentative Program

The organizer should not have pre-conceived ideas on what are the right issues to tackle. He should be continually curious and always looking for deeper levels of complexity in problems. He finally, however, should choose one issue to work on. Some organizers will go on and on studying problems and never settle on an issue. At some point you have to begin and believe that as a result of action you will discover further information.

The issue settled on must:

- Affect a large number of people. It is basic organizing to include large numbers of people.
- The people must feel strongly about it; for example, they must have complained about the problem in some way to the organizer, or given some sign that the problem bothers them.
- It should be "winnable", that is, the people should be able to get what they want soon. It shouldn't, on the other hand, be a hopeless struggle, for example, a plan to get rid of the multinationals.
- Action on the issue should interest other people who will join in. Allies are needed at every stage of the organizing work.
- The issue should be dramatic and interesting, if

possible. This will create wider interest in the organizing work.

- The issue should lead to further issues; for example, an organizer should see that action on water taps will lead to a small water consumers group that can later oppose a traditional, government-controlled leader.

#### Step 4. Ground Work

Ground work means to go around and motivate people on a one-to-one basis to do something on the water tap issue or whatever issue has been chosen. This is also called agitation. Some aspects of motivation or agitation that can be used are self-interest, morality, rights, honor or shame, and anger. Some examples:

- It is economically good for you to get public water taps. You can buy rice with your savings.
- You pay taxes. You deserve the taps.
- It is your right. The law says you should have the taps.
- God wants you to work for this. It's God's wish that you provide for your families, especially the children.
- Are you men or sheep?
- Government does it for the rich. Why not for you?
- The government doesn't respect you. That's why you don't have the taps.
- Your women are worn-out getting water. You men should do something if you're really men.

The organizer as he goes around should also talk about a general meeting to which more people can come for further discussion and action. He should, for example, propose a meeting to talk about people going to City Hall to demand water taps. He discusses the pros and cons of this action with the people he talks to. He should get people willing to do something and prepared to come to a meeting at such and such a time to agree upon such and such a type of action.

Sometimes, in our agitation, we use points intimately tied to the people's culture and religion. We should not use for agitation purposes anything in culture or religion that we don't believe in or appreciate ourselves, at least at some deep level. We should believe that nothing in culture is really good and yet against the people. If we don't believe in the things we use in our agitation, we can wind up manipulating people and act as if holy — this is the height of arrogance.

#### Step 5. The Meeting

At the general meeting, the people collectively ratify what they have already decided individually. Up to now, everything has been individual. The meeting gives a sense of collective power and confidence. It shows people they are not alone. They learn from one another's motivation and conviction, as Christians do from individual witnessing. The meeting also settles details of when to go to City Hall, how many will go, etc. This is the time to make assignments, for example, who will make the posters, who will get the permit. The action must be worked out in detail.

If the ground work is done well, the meeting will go smoothly. Should someone at the meeting say, for example, "Why don't we get our local leader to solve the problem?" the people at the meeting will answer, "No, we have decided to do it ourselves. The local leader had years to do something." If the police come, the people can defend their right to have such a meeting.

#### Step 6. Role Play

Role play means to act out the meeting that will take place between the leaders of the people and the government representatives. The leaders play themselves while some of the people take the part of the government panel and answer as they think the government people will answer. It's a way of training people to anticipate what will happen and prepare themselves. It can be fun, and very enlightening, too, to see the poor people's imitation of the powerful. Role play is a good method to develop a sense of reaction on-the-spot. The organizer can step in with advice from time to time.

The main advantage of role play over other methods of preparation is that, by its nature, it involves people's emotions as well as their intellects and people enter into it with full enthusiasm. It's not hard to do, so it's a pleasant way of reviewing issues and aspects of the problem.

Role play allows for an air of confrontation that the people should get used to.

#### Step 7. Mobilization or Action

Mobilization or action is the actual experience of the people in confronting the powerful and the actual exercise of people's power.

Conflict type of mobilizations are needed. The people's confidence and self-respect are buried beneath centuries of oppression. Confrontation is a good way to cut through all this. A good argument, surprisingly, can create a sense of equality and dignity.

What types of actions?

Some of the fun of organizing lies in these tactics. The tactics should be within the experience of the people, but outside the experience of the powerful.

A factory in India pollutes the community, for example. The people decide to visit the officer responsible everyday, bringing bags of the polluting debris that fall on their homes and placing them on his desk.

#### Step 8. Evaluation

After the action the people should sit down and review what happened, good or bad. This is actually a review of steps 1-7.

The action is the raw material of the evaluation. Some of the questions that should be covered are:

1. Did we prepare well? Did we go to the right person? Was the government official in his office as planned? Did we have the necessary permits to march? Were we punctual? Was our march orderly? Were our leaders ready to speak? Were the demands clear and feasible (could they have reasonably been granted)? Did we have enough people? Did we overestimate our strength?

2. What did we learn? Did we learn anything about how the system works in practice? About the value of people's power? About our own weaknesses?

#### Step 9. Reflection

Theoretically, reflection could be part of evaluation, but in practice it is better to separate it because it deals with deeper ongoing concerns and may need a quieter atmosphere. Reflection is the time to look at the positive values we are trying to build in the organization. It deals with sacrifice, community building, the role of leaders and authority, the nature of freedom and democracy. It is useful often to use the scriptures of the different religions in these discussions.

It is also a time for making whatever social analysis the

people may need to understand the experience they have been through. The social analysis should be based on the experience of the people and answer their questions. It should not be a tract on socialism or some organizer's utopia. It is important that the organizer use a question-and-answer-type method here (pedagogy of the oppressed) to avoid any semblance of brain-washing people.

For example, the organizer can ask the people why the government official was arrogant. The people's answers probably will be something like: "He thinks we're no good." or "He sees we're only poor squatters." The organizer by questioning further can help the people see how in the minds of the powerful, the value of people is linked to money, and show how this is a natural conclusion in a society or culture where profit-making is given the highest priority. He thus can help them see the dehumanizing potential of capitalism. Further he can help the people discuss an alternative value scale for judging people's value.

### Step 10. The Organization

The people's organization is the result of many similar actions of the people. Gradually the groups of people who have acted can come together, choose their leaders, and form

their own organization. The following are some characteristics of people's organizations that the Asian Committee for People's Organization has tried to promote:

1. It is an organization of smaller organizations, not individuals.
2. It has an internal structure that checks and balances, that helps people participate and deliberate.
3. It is multi-issued at any given time.
4. It is in constant action. Action is the lifeblood of an organization.
5. It is serious. It is out to win.
6. It chooses tactics which are effective.
7. It is visible and controversial.
8. It projects an image of power.
9. New leaders are constantly emerging.
10. Leaders and people think and operate in terms of self-interest, power tactics, etc.
11. Partisan political alliances are made very critically.
12. It raises funds from within the people.
13. It creates an impact beyond its immediate concerns and area.

