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## BOOK REVIEW

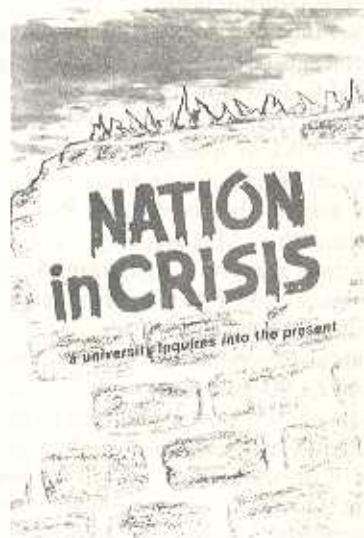
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### Confronting the Crisis: A University Searches for Relevance

by P.N. Abinales

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*Nation in Crisis. A University Inquires into the Present* -- Proceedings of the First Part of the University of the Philippines colloquium of the State of the Nation. Edited by Alexander R. Magno, University of the Philippines Press, 1984. 251 pp.



The assassination of oppositionist Benigno Aquino, Jr. opened the floodgates of protests that indicated the awakening of the hitherto silent people. Furthermore, it shook the foundations of institutions which erstwhile had come to accept the political state of affairs as the natural order of things. One of those institutions was the University of the Philippines (UP), believed by most to be the country's leading institution of learning.

During the twelve years of dictatorship, the State University failed to preserve its autonomy and liberal tradition from the onslaughts of martial law. It became much more integrated into the State machinery when it reoriented itself to the demands of "national development". Student dissent, if not effectively suppressed, was institutionalized and redirected towards "controllable channels" while a once defiant faculty found itself depoliticized by the allurements of high-paying mercenary researches and consultancies. New academic units that were compatible with the regime's projects were established while old ones which already shared visions of development similar to the regime and transnational capital found themselves greatly enhanced through generous funding and donations. In contrast, militant colleges which sought to preserve, at the very least, the UP's academic freedom, found themselves slowly strangled by budgetary cuts and limited resources.

In the academe, the liberals were silenced either because of fear of reprisal from a repressive State or because liberalism as an ideological posture afforded them the benefit of non-partisanship. The liberal school in the academe effectively drowned in the mire of mercenarism or sought refuge in ivory-tower liberal theorizing.

Among the progressives in the University, however, the legacy of the radical sixties did not die down. Repression and other forms of depoliticization failed to fully eradicate the radical tradition. Yet, during the early years of martial rule it was a legacy that was confined to the shrill pronouncements of sectarian student organizations content with romanticizing

the past, refusing to confront the new conditions with new analyses and perspectives; and also to groups of young and middle-aged faculty members who stubbornly confronted the rising tide of technocratic culture among their peers and students. They believed that ideological confrontation, in spite of the repression was still possible in the university. During these last twelve years, massive student and faculty unrests wracked the university, but these were mainly on corporate issues, i.e., issues which affected directly the interests of these two sectors. Efforts towards raising the level to the political and radical experienced intense opposition from the State and the other sectors of the academe. In spite of these small "storms", the University community, basically remained politically supportive of the status quo. Militance, however, persisted among the radical minority although its superiority in terms of analytical frameworks and political leadership was eroded by factors external (e.g., the State) and internal to it (e.g., dogmatism).

The Aquino assassination made a profound impact on the University, forcing both liberals and radicals to try to grapple with the concrete reality of the political and economic crisis. Comprehensive and specific studies on the situation began to appear in the university reflecting the analyses and positions taken by exponents of these two schools of thought. This culminated in the book *Nation in Crisis*. To date this book is the most comprehensive compilation of views on the crisis by people in the academe.

The book was borne out of an apprehension expressed by a faculty member to the University President that at this given historical conjuncture when Philippine society was in the midst of an intense crisis, the University was socially irrelevant. Out of succeeding talks, a two-part colloquium was planned in which various intellectuals shared their thoughts on the crisis and delineated alternatives to the present society. *Nation in Crisis* contains the proceedings of the first part of the colloquium, a total of seven papers (and respective reactions to these) which essentially deals with two major issues: authoritarian politics and the present economy. The papers reveal the diversity of ideological outlooks in the University; all grapple with the crisis from their respective parameters and frameworks. Except for one comment from a College of Law professor, the rest were critical of the authoritarian regime and its policies, couching their critiques in academic jargon, perhaps to distinguish themselves from straight political (and non-academic?) commentaries on the issues.

The liberal position guides the papers of Ledevina Cariño ("The Succession Issue and the Continuity of the Present Political Order"), Carolina Hernandez ("The Military and the Future of Civilian Rule in the Context of the Prevailing Political Crisis") and Salvador P. Lopez ("The People's Right to Know"). Fraternal to this group of liberal political scientists are the economists who focus on the Philippine debt and balance of payments crisis in a neo-classical fashion — Dante Canlas ("Balance of Payments, Government Deficits, Credit Policy and Growth: Notes on the Economic Slowdown") and Edita Tan ("Philippine External Debt"). These papers so far represent the best attempts by liberals in the University to systematize their views and, at the same time, to introduce new insights on the problem from their perspective.

As a critique of the works of the liberal political scientists, this review would like to assert, that although rich in data, the papers of Cariño, Hernandez and Lopez fail in their attempts to root out the bases of the political crisis, centering more on the easily perceived appearances of a regime in crisis than the forms and their dynamics that have

brought about these appearances. Cariño's paper is eclectic, failing to define a proper framework of analysis and most of the time borrowing much from the frameworks of others — both liberal and radical. In the end, while Cariño's data deserve attention, her failure to define a framework militates against the richness of information she presents. A certain naivete is even observable in her discussions of the opposition to Marcos. This limitation, however, may be expected from one who views politics from the outside.

Hernandez' paper, on the other hand, stands out from this group as hers may be regarded as an original contribution — she pioneered the study of the Philippine military. However, as pointed out by one of her commentators, Hernandez confines herself to a "largely descriptive" study and leaves untouched some of the more demanding concerns of a political analysis. Furthermore, these two papers' refusal or inability to perceive the political crisis of the regime in structural and systematic terms places them in very untenable grounds. Lopez simply summarizes issues on media repression and uncharacteristically fails to use his commonly-accepted political wit to go beyond what everyone else knows.

The neo-classical economists, likewise, suffer from similar limitations when they try to discuss important aspects of the economy. The economists are, however, much more theoretically grounded in their neo-classical framework which distinguishes them to a certain extent from their political counterparts. Canlas' paper makes reading very difficult with his technocratese yet together with Tan's, it makes a good beginner's guide to neo-classical explications of the crisis.

In contrast, two papers appear to espouse radical positions — that of Alexander R. Magno ("From Political Polarization to Political Isolation: The Present Disposition of Political Forces and the Search for a Clear Process of Transition") and Perfecto Fernandez ("Justice and Human Rights: The Legal System and Presidential Decrees"). The significance of these two papers cannot but be underscored. They are concrete manifestations of how the radical intellectual tradition, in spite of its relatively recent origins and the repression by martial law, has managed to survive. Magno's article is particularly important as it provides us with an insight on how a small segment of radical intellectuals, relatively autonomous from orthodox straight-jacketing, attempts to develop and enrich the tradition by introducing new concepts coming from Marxists after Marx and Lenin. Magno's treatment of the political crisis is less empirical and more theoretical (to be more specific, neo-Marxian) and thus presents a radical perspective of the crisis in a different light as compared to orthodox perceptions. Ironically, it is also this overconcern with the theoretical basis that makes Magno's paper vulnerable to a devastating critique by a commentator who questioned the validity of the paper's theoretical posture by citing empirical evidences. Fernandez deviates from his subject of inquiry and loses himself in a generalized and rather simplified presentation of the political economy of Philippine authoritarian rule. The author merely confirms the presence of a radical school in the University, but taken as it is, no significant radical breakthrough is introduced in the paper as compared to Magno's controversial work.

**Nation in Crisis** in spite of these clearly perceived deficiencies (including its numerous typographical errors) does play a role in the attempts of the Filipino people to grapple with the present national crisis. If the University's role is to help shed light on current problems, the book functions well as a basis for debate and discussion. The University — through the book — thus tries to become as relevant as possible to contemporary times. Through **Nation in Crisis**, the University's

role as an institution of ideas relating itself to society has been effectively fulfilled.

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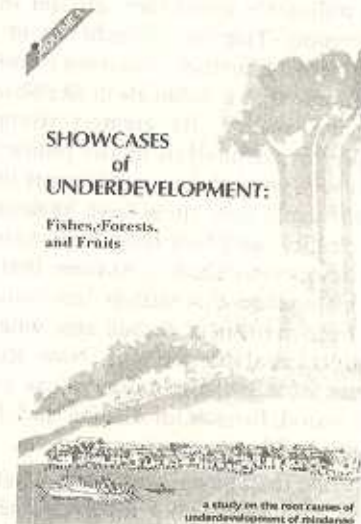
### Mindanao's Showroom Industries

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by Karl Gaspar

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Showcases of Underdevelopment: Fishes, Forests, and Fruits. By Eduardo Tadem, Johnny Reyes, and Linda Susan Magno. Alternative Resource Center. 1984. 208 pp.



There are showcases that reveal a tragedy brought about by our historical past when we, as a people, had no control over our very own resources. These are mirrors through which we can view our imprisonment in the bleak world of underdevelopment, that state of being where we hope to experience a take-off, although we know that we are shackled to the chains of subservience and domination. These are case studies which bring us face-to-face with the stark reality — the depletion of our fishes, the rape of our forests and the misuse of fruits, even as we discover the roots as to why the people are poor when the land is so rich.

**Showcases of Underdevelopment: Fishes, Forests, and Fruits** is a most welcome book precisely because it is a study which attempts to present the reader with the root causes of underdevelopment in Mindanao. Tadem, Reyes and Magno have collaborated on a project, the product of which has tremendous value, given the present bloody scenario of Mindanao. The publisher is to be congratulated for daring to come out with a study which is of major interest to all those who have wondered what happened to the land of promise, and why it has become the bleeding land. **Showcases** is the latest addition to what remains a very limited list of local studies on the region's political economy. This is one of those rare Third World research studies meant to contribute towards awakening a people to their disenfranchisement so that they will pursue their commitment to genuine development.

Written from the perspective of those who bear the brunt of the nefarious effects of a development model which benefits only a few, **Showcases** helps to explain the reason behind the gory and grim statistics compiled by the Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP), Mindanao Regional Office. "Crisis breeds dissent," said Lorenzo Tañada. For years now, the people of Mindanao have journeyed from crisis to crisis, as their lives have gone from tolerable to unbearable. The land was not only fertile for agri-business planta-