

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

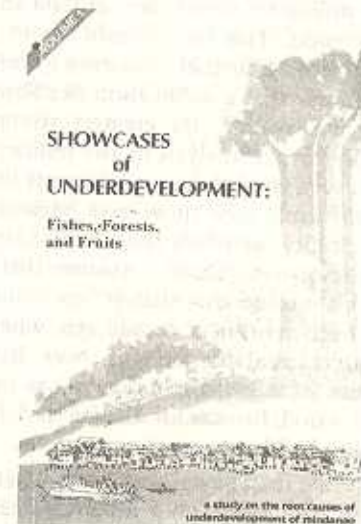
role as an institution of ideas relating itself to society has been effectively fulfilled.

BOOK REVIEW

Mindanao's Showroom Industries

by Karl Gaspar

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-

tions, but also for dissent. In time, the social unrest has turned to rebellion.

This scenario has attracted the attention of journalists, social scientists and solidarity groups not only within the country but also from overseas. Mindanao today is described as the place where the action is! It certainly is the region where the action has been, insofar as the incursion of transnational corporations (TNCs) and local big business to the countryside is concerned. Ironically, the development model which has been introduced to this region is the very reason why the people remain marginalized. Out of a conviction that they are the ones to fashion a future where the promise can be fulfilled, the people have militantly stood their ground and resisted the continuing oppression. This has brought about the "action" which in turn propelled a further escalation of militarization.

It was inevitable that a publication like *Showcases* would surface out of this reality. Its greatest strength is that it provides a comprehensive analysis of the political economy in this region, as viewed from three major export lines. The roots are uncovered to reveal how these have become so grounded in the capitalist reality, and how the complexities of facts and figures really converge to show a system that has an inner logic. This book's weakness is that it has come out so late. It should have been written a decade ago, when tragedy had not yet reached colossal proportions. Now Reyes speaks of the "death throes of a twilight industry" as he refers to the Mindanao-based wood firms. Our fishing and fruit industries are also faced with highly pessimistic prospects.

But better late than never. And better that this empirical study (which at the same time involves phenomenological approaches) should be the product of the two progressive research institutions of Mindanao rather than our governmental research agencies whose studies leave much to be desired, in terms of credibility and integrity.

The latter have published hundreds of research studies. With apolitical private groups and institutions, the government has produced reports with glossy covers and doctored statistics which have had no impact on the lives of the majority. *Showcases* is not unbiased. It makes no attempt to hide its reading of those who are responsible for the region's underdevelopment. But it performs the task of informing the reader about the story behind the tragedy with an impressive collation and analysis of facts and figures, raw data and secondary information, life stories and related news reports.

The development issue is never neutral. When tens of thousands of people are subjected to the dehumanizing impact of underdevelopment, the researcher needs to take an option. Not to take an option is really taking an option in favor of those who benefit from the continuance of underdevelopment. Neutrality is a myth! Those who insist on taking an "objective" stance in the name of scientificity have no one to fool except themselves and their masters. They are really the apologists for the elitist establishment; they are the harbingers of the forces that would maintain the status quo.

The authors take a definite stand; *Showcases* takes an option. The stand is clear:

There is something wrong with an economic system that gives the lowest priority to the working class and the highest concern for foreign exchange earnings and corporate profits.

The option is firm:

... the path of development chosen for the country by the technocrats that run the economy has

only led to the increased marginalization of greater masses of the people including sections of the local bourgeois elite.

In the light of the transnationalization of virtually every aspect of Philippine society and degradation of the domestic productive sectors, the nationalist alternative looms into the picture with even greater force than it did in earlier years. A self-reliant, self-generated, and inward-looking growth strategy lies at the polar end of the present development model and if only for this should be viewed as the ideal alternative.

Just because it takes an option, this does not mean that *Showcases* is wanting in scholarship. In fact, it follows a scientifically valid research framework which could serve as a model for the same kind of research studies in other Third World countries. This framework makes it possible for the researchers to provide a broader perspective for the three case studies which they focus on. It is a well-researched, professionally-documented, and meticulously-collated research study. The statistical facts and figures are staggering. In fact, there is too much data included in the study, that one is not able to do justice to the document by reading it quickly. This report is meant to be studied, reflected upon, discussed and made the basis for action. *Showcases* flows naturally into praxis.

The scope covered by the information in this report extends to a wide spectrum. Taken as a panorama, the report names names, presents charts and maps, and also presents contrasts. The biggest names in the galaxy of TNCs and local big businesses get top billing here. The names of tuna exporters (Ricsan Development Corporation, Orient Marine, Philippine Tuna Ventures), logging concession holders (Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines, Davao Timber Corporation and Sarmiento Industries, Inc.) and TNCs engaged in fruit exports (Dole Philippines, Philippine Packing Corporation and Tagum Agricultural Development Corporation Co.) find their way into this book. A big cast among those in the top 1,000 corporations in the Philippines are on the book's pages.

But what gives the book its soul are the vignettes involving real and fictional characters from the grassroots. Their stories lend drama to an otherwise highly academic and cerebral treatment of the concrete life realities of a people at the losing end of this development strategy. There is Eugenio Donato, the small fisherman who must brave the elements as well as armed sea pirates, corrupt military men and big fishermen. The widow, Mrs. Rose Vivar, shares this fate. In the same boat — literally — is Felix Portero, the *pokotero*, and Arnel



Lagusan, the *marinero*. Then one meets the workers of Zamboanga Wood Products, Inc. who declare a strike and who ultimately face the firing of armalites at their picket lines. The reader also encounters the 130 workers at the Buayan logging operations in North Cotabato who earn only P500 per month. Mang Sario, a banana grower, and Mang Danding are but two of the thousand farmers and workers whose lives have been intertwined with the major corporations in the fruits industry.

Their life stories show the extent of the "unequal distribution of wealth and capital resources (which) necessarily accompanies the almost monopolistic control of the bigger companies of a particular industry". There are thousands of them — small fishermen, those in canneries, in logging camps and sawmills, the agricultural laborers and industrial workers. If one adds all their incomes together, the amount remains small when compared to the profits earned by the TNCs and big businessmen. It is from this perspective — the view from

the exploited who provide the labor — that change becomes the urgent order of the day. These structures which condemn a people to a life of poverty and powerlessness will have to give way to an alternative.

"The road to liberation," demands "alternatives". The authors have not been able to articulate these alternatives apart from a general idea incorporated in the Introduction. Perhaps this is the limitation of the study — it sets out to pinpoint the roots, but not how to uproot these and what to plant in their place. Perhaps this is the challenge being given to those who would use this study as one reference material to help constitute the basis for a plan of action.

There is no denying the important educational value of this book. It serves a purpose at a very urgent moment in the lives of the people in Mindanao. It responds to the needs of the middle class who must have books like this to encourage them to forge links with the militant sectors of society. For the teachers and students, here is a report that could serve as a textbook for social science subjects. For those engaged in development work, here is a study that points out the priorities for social action. Lawyers, doctors and the religious who are involved in human rights can be guided by this study as to the areas of injustices that demand a commitment towards social transformation.

It is to be expected that the different groups, organizations and institutions which subscribe to their own ideological posture should have no major problem with the findings and conclusions of this report. There is something here for everyone, except for those who continue to view the people as objects of their development schemes. Those who view the global problem from a North-South perspective should be able to concretely see how the Philippines, as part of the South, has always been at a disadvantage in her economic relations with the North — specifically the US and Japan. The North-South reality could even be seen within the confines of the country, in regards to "internal colonialism". This involves "the case of Mindanao as an area for relatively rapid capital accumulation and the consequent draining of the surplus to the Metro Manila region".

The ecological issues raised by the book would warm the hearts of the environmentalists among the readers. "The threat of an ecological *whiplash*" is becoming more and more a reality in Mindanao. The seas, the forests, the land — all of which are our patrimony and which may need to be protected by our blood — are gradually being depleted. If the madness does not end, there will not be anymore fish, our forests will become deserts, and no seeds will grow on what was once a gloriously fertile land. Reyes underlines this issue and the future generations will thank him for it.

Showcases does an exemplary job at the juxtaposition of images, which show the conflicting interests of the class protagonists interacting within the confines of this scenario. The role of the State in this situation of conflict is well defined. "The Philippine State is essentially a defender of class interests, more specifically the class interests of landowners, export crop producers, processors, and the exporters." The indictment is eloquently stated:

The government is the primary agent in the Philippines for the institution of export-led and import-dependent growth strategies. In this manner, the State becomes directly responsible for the perpetuation of prevailing conditions of underdevelopment.

Such direct statements demand a broad audience at this stage of our continuing struggle for self-determination. Alas,



Shosuke Takeuchi