

An Appraisal of Presidential Decree No. 27's Purposes and Accomplishments, with Concentration on the Province of Nueva Ecija

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THIS paper will attempt to assess the impact of Presidential Decree No. 27 on land tenure in the Philippines and, more specifically, in the province of Nueva Ecija. Presidential Decree No. 27 (hereinafter referred to as PD No. 27) was issued on October 21, 1972 and it decreed "the emancipation of tenants from the bondage of the soil, transferring to them the ownership of the land they till." Under the decree, all tenant (either share-crop or leasehold) farmers of private rice and corn land were deemed owners of five hectares of non-irrigated or three hectares of irrigated land. Landowners were permitted to retain no more than seven hectares if they were farming it or they were going to farm it. The value of the land was to be "2½ times the average harvest of three normal crop years immediately preceding" the decree. This was to be paid over a period of 15 years at 6 per cent interest. The government guaranteed amortization and in cases of default, the farmer's cooperative — according to the decree, the farmer must join a cooperative — would pay the amortization. Land acquired under the decree was not "transferable except by hereditary succession or to the Government" un-

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der specified conditions. The Secretary of the Department of Agrarian Reform was given the authority to issue pertinent rules and regulations for the implementation of the decree.

The land tenure situation in the Philippines actually had its origins in pre-Spanish times, and it has continued up to the present with various changes in response to Spanish and American land policies.¹ From pre-Spanish times up to the present, land tenancy has been typified by farmers tilling the soil which belonged to someone else. The owners, through various devices, such as loans, managed to reap the lion's share of the produce from the farm and to create a very strong dependence on the part of the farmer for their patronage.² Government concern for the situation has usually been reactive, spurred by unrest among the farmers. The American colonial regime attempted to deal with the problem by purchasing the huge landholdings of the friars and distributing them to the

¹ Marshall S. McLennan, "Land Tenure Patterns in the Philippines, Their Origins and Evolution," *Solidarity*, Vol. VIII, No. 5 (November 1973), pp. 3-11.

² For a brief but informative description of this development, see Francis Murray, Jr., "Land Reform in the Philippines: An Overview," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), pp. 151-166.

former tenants, but the strength of the "patron-client" arrangement was so strong that the solution eventually was beneficial only to the landowner.³ Under the Commonwealth Government, steps were taken to expropriate or purchase large estates and to resell them to the tenant occupants. The Rural Progress Administration was established to implement the program, but it accomplished very little.⁴ In the later days of the Commonwealth period, a new direction emerged, the regulation of tenant-landowner relations and the sharing of produce by arrangements. However, due to landowner resistance, the various Public Acts failed.⁵ With the coming of independence, the interest in land-owner-tenant relations was renewed. However, the Huk revolt was then in operation and these new efforts were fruitless.⁶

The first major land reform effort came under President Magsaysay with the passage of Republic Act 1400, in 1955. Under this Act, a Land Tenure Administration (LTA) was set up directly under the President. The role of the LTA was to expropriate or purchase landed estates over 300 hectares and then resell them to tenants. The Act, however, did not provide adequate financial resources for land purchasing or for assisting repurchase by the tenants and, therefore, joined its predecessors in the ranks of the defeated.⁷

³ McLennan, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁴ Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 157-159.

The present-day approach to land tenure is rooted in Republic Act 3844 passed in August, 1963 and known as the Agricultural Land Reform Code. The main objectives of R.A. 3844 were to establish owner-cultivatorship and the economic family-sized farm as the basis of Philippine agriculture and to divert landlord capital from agricultural to industrial development.⁸ These objectives were to be met by converting share-crop tenants to leaseholders, and after a suitable period of time, to convert leaseholders to owner-cultivators. The implementation was to be incremental, starting in specific locations designated by the government as Land Reform Areas. In these areas, all share-crop tenants were automatically converted to leaseholders. The agency entrusted with implementation was the National Land Reform Council (NLRC); on the local level, there were Land Reform Project Teams. The implementation of the Act got off to a rather slow start; by 1965 only 6,747 share tenants had been converted to leaseholders.⁹ However, things picked up and by 1971 some 236 municipalities in 20 provinces had been proclaimed Land Reform Areas and 53,420 share-crop tenants out of 173,568 in the Land Reform Areas, shifted to leasehold.¹⁰ In September 1971, in an

⁸ Department of Agrarian Reform, "The Philippine Agrarian Reform Program Under the New Society," May 1973 (mimeo).

⁹ National Land Reform Council, "Land Reform: A Four-Year Program," undated circular 1965.

¹⁰ Basilio N. de los Reyes, "Can Land Reform Succeed?" *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 84.

effort to speed up conversions, R.A. 3844 was amended by Republic Act 6389. The amendment changed the name of the law to the "Agrarian Reform Code" and established the Department of Agrarian Reform to replace the National Land Reform Council. One of the important measures was that share-crop tenants no longer had to wait until their land was designated a Land Reform Area because by virtue of the Act the share-crop tenants were automatically converted to leaseholders.¹¹

On September 21, 1972, President Marcos issued Proclamation 1081 placing the Philippines under Martial Law. Five days later, he issued PD No. 2 which declared the entire country as a Land Reform Area as set forth in R.A. 3844. Then, as mentioned earlier, he signed Presidential Decree No. 27 on October 21, 1972. In his own words,

with these two decrees, the government set into motion the massive overhaul of the system of landownership in the Philippines, and at last land reform ceased be an unrealized dream in our society.¹²

Operation Land Transfer

The Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) established Operation Land Transfer to implement Presidential Decree No. 27. Basically the operation works like this:

¹¹ Angelina R. Muñoz, "The Agrarian Challenge." *Solidarity*, Vol. VIII, No. 5 (November 1973), p. 19.

¹² Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Notes on the New Society of the Philippines* (Manila: Marcos Foundation, Inc., 1973), p. 139.

¹³ These replaced the Land Reform Project Teams established under R.A. 3844.

- 1) Agrarian Reform Teams (ARTs)¹³ identify the tenant-farmer, his landowner and the particular parcel of land.
- 2) The value of the land and the mode of payment are determined.
- 3) A Bureau of Lands representative carries out a parcellary mapping profile of the land.
- 4) This information is sent to the National Computer Center which generates a Land Transfer Certificate (LTC) and an Amortization Schedule (A/S) and sends them to DAR Central Office.
- 5) The DAR Central Office authenticates, registers and distributes the documents.
- 6) The tenant receives the *full* Land Title if he is a member of a recognized farmer's cooperative and has paid in full the cost of the land.¹⁴

Operation Land Transfer in Nueva Ecija

The province of Nueva Ecija has figured prominently in the history of land tenure as witnessed by the "Colorum" uprising in 1925 and the support within the province of the Sakdal Party in the 1930's.¹⁵ In the implementation of R.A. 3844, all of the municipalities in Nueva Ecija were proclaimed Land Reform Areas by 1970,¹⁶

¹⁴ Department of Agrarian Reform, Department Memorandum Circular No. 20, September 11, 1973.

¹⁵ Jim Richardson, "Does Grass Roots Action Lead to Agrarian Reform," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 75.

¹⁶ Mentioned in footnote of Romana Pahilanga-de los Reyes and Frank Lynch "Reluctant Rebels: Leasehold Converts in Nueva Ecija," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 74.

and of the 53,420 share-crop tenants nationwide who had shifted to leasehold, 35,962 or 69 per cent, were from Nueva Ecija.¹⁷ Operation Land Transfer was originally launched in Nueva Ecija in November, 1972.¹⁸ Prior to this, the Nueva Ecija Land Reform Integrated Development Program (NE-LRIDP) was initiated on June 30, 1970. The objectives of the program were the following:

- 1) To implement an integrated provincial land reform program and to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of existing government machinery and legislation for carrying out the the national land reform program; and
- 2) To test alternative approaches for simultaneously accelerating land-tenure transitions and agricultural productivity.¹⁹

The amount of attention that Nueva Ecija has received is commensurate to the aim of making the province the showcase of the land reform program.²⁰ Mr. Jose Drilon, Undersecretary of Agriculture and Natural Resources noted that "if land reform does not succeed in Nueva Ecija, it will probably not succeed elsewhere in the country. Or to be more conservative, it will probably have rougher sailing elsewhere."²¹

When Operation Land Transfer began in Nueva Ecija, there were 68,412 tenants farming 158,107 hectares of rice and corn land owned by 25,609 landowners.²² As was noted above, 35,962 tenants were leaseholders. However, according to Pahilanga-de los Reyes and Lynch,

a large percentage of so-called lessees are (were) actually 'compromise' lessees, who either have (had) no written leasehold contract or have (had) one which has (had) little relation to the actual agreement they have (had) reached with their landlords."²³

In spite of this situation and its implications for land transfer, the operation in Nueva Ecija has been very successful in transferring land to the tenant-tillers. Before going into the actual figures, it should be noted that according to DAR instructions,²⁴ Operation Land Transfer concentrated on landholdings in the 100-hectare or more category. After completing operations in this category, the ARTs then concentrated on the 50 to less-than-100-hectare category and presently, it is the 24 to less-than-50-hectare category which is being completed. The deadline for completion of the last category is June 30, 1974.²⁵ In the categories of less than 24 hectares, a

¹⁷ De los Reyes, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

¹⁸ Conrado F. Estrella, "New Thrust for Agrarian Progress," *Solidarity*, Vol. VIII, No. 5 (November 1973), p. 13.

¹⁹ De los Reyes, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁰ Pahilanga. De los Reyes and Lurch, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²¹ Jose D. Drilon, Jr., "Comment on B. de los Reyes Paper" (see note 10 above), *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 94.

²² Data supplied by Mr. Eugenio Bernardo, District Director, Department of Agrarian Reform, Nueva Ecija, on February 21, 1974 during an interview with the writer.

²³ Pahilanga-De los Reyes and Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

²⁴ Department of Agrarian Reform, Memorandum to All Regional Directors, District Officers, Team Leaders and Fieldmen and All Concerned, dated January 2 1973.

²⁵ Please refer to note 22.

status quo has been declared in the relations between the landowner and tenant, meaning, there will be no ejection of tenants by landowners and tenants will continue to pay landowners lease rentals.²⁶

The program in Nueva Ecija has identified and interviewed 58,767 tenant farmers out of a total of 68,412. The reason for the discrepancy, according to Mr. Gene Bernardo, District Director of the Department of Agrarian Reform, is that some tenants refuse to be interviewed because they are related to the landowner.²⁷ In some cases, the tenants are sons and, in most cases, more distant relatives. In effect, these non-interviewees have elected to remove themselves from the benefits of the program. At the moment, there are no plans to bring them into Operation Land Transfer. These people are concentrated in the small-holdings categories. Another problem in identifying and interviewing is that landowners have ejected their tenants after October 21, 1972, in contravention of PD No. 27, and other landowners have refused to recognize their tenants. In these cases, legal action is required to ensure the tenant of his rights. However, legal action proceeds slowly due to a shortage of attorneys in the program. While 24 lawyers are deemed necessary, only 14 are presently employed. The main reason is that the pay does not seem to be competitive.

²⁶ Refer to note 24.

²⁷ Interview of the author with Mr. Eugenio Bernardo, District Director, Department of Agrarian Reform, Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija.

In the area of land valuation, some problems have arisen which tend to slow down Land Transfer. The Barrio Committee on Land Production (BCLP), established by DAR Memorandum Circular No. 26,²⁸ is entrusted with the function to determine the average gross production for each parcel of land. The BCLP composed of:

- 1) The Barrio Captain,
- 2) One representative of the Samahang Nayon,
- 3) Four representatives of the tenant-farmers,
- 4) Two representatives of the owner-cultivators,
- 5) Two representatives of the landowners, and
- 6) One DAR representative.

What normally happens is that the tenant submits figures as does the landowner. There is usually a discrepancy, with the landowner's claims being higher than the tenant's. The dispute is settled in the BCLP by voting. Invariably, the voting usually shows the representatives of the tenant farmers, the owner-cultivators, the Samahang Nayon and the Barrio Captain supporting the tenant. As a result, the landowner lodges a protest. The protest can go as high as the DAR Secretary if the landowner is not satisfied with the rulings at lower levels. This can easily take up to two months' time. For this reason, the DAR issued further

²⁸ Department of Agrarian Reform, Department Memorandum Circular No. 26, dated November 5, 1973.

instructions²⁹ which accept an agreement between the landowner and the tenant as the determination for land valuation as long as it is within the context of PD No. 27. At present, ARTs are attempting to get land valuations settled in the latter way. However, if this is not possible the case goes to the BLCF.

Table 1 provides a listing of goals and accomplishments in Nueva Ecija as of January 28, 1974. The table itself is an indication of another problem. In attempting to gather data for this paper, the writer approached the DAR Planning Division. He was given data on accomplishments divided into various categories but he was unable to obtain the baseline data for the categories. For this, he went to the District Director, Cabanatuan City. The District Director had the baseline

data divided into the various categories, but he did not have the accomplishment data separated into categories. In order to keep the table honest it is well to keep in mind that the total-scope figures are estimates, but estimates which are probably as close to actual figures as are available at this time. The accomplishments figures are those released by the National Computer Center based on information from the province. A further reminder: when reading the table take note that only tenant-farmers tilling land in the top-three categories have actually been issued their Land Transfer Certificates. The tenant-farmers in the bottom-three categories are operating on a lease-rental basis. This situation will continue until the rules and regulations implementing Presidential Decree No. 27 are promulgated.

In analyzing the figures in the top-three categories, it will be seen in the

TABLE 1
OPERATION LAND TRANSFER IN NUEVA ECIJA SHOWING TOTAL SCOPE
AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS AS OF JANUARY 28, 1974

Land Size Category (Hectares)	Number of Tenants in Province ^a	LTCs generated by NCC for Tenants ^b	Number of Land-owners in Province ^a	Number of Land-owners affected by LTCs ^b	Total Hectarage ^a	Hectarage Covered by LTCs ^a
100.00 & above	16,481	12,271	239	124	34,809	27,494
50.00-99.99	9,042	5,483	329	178	22,183	12,548
24.00-49.99	7,515	4,328	585	264	16,183	9,350
12.01-23.99	7,822	3,397	1,358	399	19,053	6,784
7.01-12.00	6,940	2,272	2,227	485	16,849	4,440
7.00 & below	20,612	6,882	20,871	4,560	49,030	10,950
Totals	68,412	34,633	25,609	6,010	158,107	71,566

^a Source of information—District Director, DAR, Nueva Ecija.

^b Source of information—Central Office, DAR, Quezon City.

100-hectare-and-above category that Land Transfer Certificates have been issued to 75 per cent of the tenant-farmers. This covered over 78 per cent of the total hectareage and involved a little over 50 per cent of the landowners. However, looking closely at the landowners' figures, one will see that 115 landowners are still not covered, yet, there are only 7,315 hectares of land remaining in the category. By simple arithmetic, it would take at least 11,500 hectares of land to ensure that the remaining landowners in the category did, in fact, own 100 hectares of land or more. At the moment, there is no explanation. The pressure on the DAR Central, Regional and District offices for statistics, facts and figures, obviously results in fudged figures and hastily assembled data. It points up another problem, i.e., little contact and coordination on statistics. The Central Office generates figures, usually based on the National Computer Center figures which get them from the ARTs in the field, who also give them to the District and Regional Offices. The source of the data (the ARTs) is basically the same, but the resulting figures issued from the different offices are often contradictory. Another aspect of this is that the Agrarian Reform Teams complete the Operation Land Transfer (OLT) forms. After they send them on to the National Computer Center (NCC), they include these in their data. However, the Central Office, relying chiefly on NCC data, must wait until the OLTs are processed. This creates data lag.

To continue with our analysis, in the 50.00-to-99.99-hectare category, 60 per cent of the tenants have received Land Transfer Certificates covering 56 per cent of the land owned by 54 per cent of the landowners. In this category, it will be noted that the land not yet covered by the program is sufficient to allow the remaining landowners 50 hectares apiece or more. The 24.00-49.99-hectare category, which has not been completed, shows that 57 per cent tenants have received LTCs, covering 57 percent of the land owned by 45 per cent of the landowners. The landowners' figures in this category show that it would take 7,704 hectares to accommodate the remaining landlords with just 24 hectares apiece; however, there are supposedly only 7,833 hectares not covered.

From the data presented, it is only fair to state that Operation Land Transfer is working very well in Nueva Ecija. The reasons for this success are that not only was Nueva Ecija designated as an area wherein pilot projects were set up,³⁰ but that it also received much added support from the NELRIDP. From the tenants' point of view, the work done in the province under R.A. Nos. 3844 and 6389 served as a ground softener before the advent of Operation Land Transfer. As was mentioned previously, the Government wanted the program to work, so they poured the proper amount of support into the province to make sure it did.

³⁰ Presidential Letter of Instruction No. 46, dated December 7, 1972.

Operation Land Transfer is the first step in agrarian reform, the transfer of the land to the tiller.³¹ The important consideration now is whether the new owner-tiller will be able to retain his newly acquired land. One measure which has been taken is the establishment of Samahang Nayon. Briefly, Samahang Nayon is a farmers' association organized at the barrio level. In time, it is expected that the associations will evolve into cooperatives. In the First Development Area of Nueva Ecija,³² a pilot area, a number of Samahang Nayons are already cooperatives. In the event that a new owner-tiller should revert to his former state of tenancy, the DAR, through the Samahang Nayon, has the power to remove the tenant and replace him with an alternate landless farmer. If the new owner-tenant contracts people to operate his farm, in effect sub-tenanting the land, he also stands to lose the land.³³ The support the new owner needs for his farm is available through production loans for seeds, fertilizer and insecticides and facility loans for such things as storage facilities, among others. The money is made available, through what is called supervised credit or non-collateral loans, by the Philippine National Bank and the Bureau of Agricultural Extension through such programs as the Masagana 99. One present difficulty is that there are no mechanisms

for providing subsistence loans. This absence could force farmers to go to money lenders who normally charge 10 per cent of the original principal per month.³⁴ In past times, these subsistence loans normally were procured from the landowner at less usurious rates.³⁵ The need for a strong cooperative movement has been recognized and in April 1973, Presidential Decree No. 175 was issued, its expressed purpose being "Strengthening The Cooperative Movement." A main feature of the decree was the establishment of the Cooperative Development Loan Fund which acts as a "source of loanable funds to cooperatives; as a guarantee for loans granted to cooperatives; and as a source of advances to cooperatives for the purchase of equity of rural banks." It is hoped that the various cooperatives in contiguous areas will eventually band together to form rural banks. A move in this direction has already started in Nueva Ecija.³⁶ When I asked Mr. Bernardo, DAR District Director of Nueva Ecija, what were the chances of the new owners retaining their land and developing into solid farmers, he replied that if the various supports were continued at the present level, it would work.³⁷

Another question related to Operation Land Transfer is productivity. The Agrarian Reform Education Service noted,

³⁴ Panilanga, De los Reyes and Lynch. *op. cit.*, p. 37.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ This was noted in a conversation with Mr. Pablo S. Sayson, Administrative Officer, Nueva Ecija Land Reform Integrated Development Program (NELRIDP), held on February 21, 1974 in Cabanatuan, Nueva Ecija.

³⁷ See note 22.

³¹ Estrella, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

³² Composed of the municipalities of Cabiao, San Isidro, Gapan and Peñaranda. This information was obtained from Mr. J. Reyes, Area Coordinator.

³³ Refer to note 22.

The conversion of the share tenants into lessees made them more receptive to accepted modern farm practices. As a result, in the leasehold areas the average yield per hectare in 1966 for the wet season crop increased by 30 per cent and for the dry season, 59 per cent.³⁸

The view that productivity is directly attributable to a change in tenure status has been challenged. The United States Agency for International Development in 1970 listed the following reasons for the increase in rice productivity:

- 1) Introduction of new high-yielding varieties;
- 2) A 30-35 per cent increase in price of palay;
- 3) Intensified effort on the part of the private sector to supply the necessary material inputs;
- 4) Increase in the amount of credit made available;
- 5) Expansion and improvements of irrigation facilities;
- 6) Central Government determination to increase rice production.³⁹

From these two views, it can be seen that productivity is a result of many factors, one of these, being land tenure. The transformation of tenant to owner can be seen as a positive contribution toward productivity, as long as the other elements are present. They include credit, marketing and technical

³⁸ Department of Agrarian Reform, "The Philippine Agrarian Reform Program Before and After the Declaration of Martial Law," Diliman, Quezon City, November 10 1973. (mimeo).

³⁹ Lewis E. Gleek and Harold D. Koone, "Land Reform in the Philippines" Agency for International Development, Spring Review, USAID/Philippines, June 1970, p. 81.

support.⁴⁰ A social element involved in reporting production information is the fact that the government agency which reports the information will usually stress the contribution of his agency, an example being the DAR information sheet mentioned above. From a newsreport, rice production in Nueva Ecija this year is in for a large increase over the 1972-1973 crop year. This, according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics provincial-in-charge, is due to good weather and the absence of pest infestations.⁴¹ These reasons probably did not go down well with the Masagana 99 people or the DAR group.

Another aspect of Operation Land Transfer is the problem of small landowners, those with landholdings of 24 hectares or less.⁴² From statistics gathered in pilot provinces, it was revealed that about 98 per cent of the rice and corn landowners fall into the category of small landowners and that about 78 per cent of the tenants in the pilot provinces work these lands.⁴³ President Marcos wrote: "The small landowners must be given just treatment that is to say, they cannot be treated in exactly the same way as the big landowners or inheritors of large estates."⁴⁴ At present, the situation is one of status

⁴⁰ David Christenson, "Comment on B. de los Reyes" (see note 10), *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 84.

⁴¹ "Ecija Sees Big Harvest," *Bulletin Today*,

⁴² Term defined in Presidential Letter of Instruction No. 143, dated October 31, 1973, February 19, 1974.

⁴³ Department of Agrarian Reform, "Before and After the Declaration of Martial Law."

⁴⁴ Marcos, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

quo, with the tenants on small holdings paying lease rent. In Letter of Instruction No. 143, President Marcos asked for information about the small landowners. He wanted to find out the number of small landowners who were absentee landowners because of circumstances beyond their control, such as government or military service, or who had no other source of income aside from this income from the land. A study was conducted in nine sample provinces and the results showed that of the absentee landowners in the sample, 82.72 per cent were reported by occupation to be in the category of "Others." The other occupation categories in the study were: Armed Forces, .46 per cent; other Government Offices, 8.97 per cent; Non-Government Offices 5.37 per cent; Government Retirees; 1.68 per cent and Non-Government Retirees, .74 per cent. With the writer asked for a description of the "Others" category from the Office of Planning, DAR, none was forthcoming. An intuitive description might include in the category the unemployed. This description is borne out by figures in the same study for "Percentage of Income Derived from Landholding Against Total Income by Occupation." In the nine provinces, the totals by category look like this:

Others	75.00%
Armed Forces	23.30%
Other Government Offices .	28.50%
Non-Government Offices ...	40.40%
Government Retirees	44.10%
Non-Government Retirees .	18.80%

So far the study has shown, at least in the nine provinces, that the majority of absentee landowners have an occupation falling in the "Others" category and these people account for 75 per cent of their total income from their landholdings.⁴⁵ What action will be taken on this information remains to be seen. There have been no indications from the President up to this time.

Aligned with this problem is the question of land retention by landowners. Presidential Decree No. 27, states:

In all cases, the landowner may retain an area of not more than seven (7) hectares if such landowner is cultivating such area or will now cultivate it.

The operative words are "if such landowner is cultivating." Many landowners have requested their seven hectare retention area based on their intention of cultivating; however, in the top three land categories, DAR policy has been one of zero retention by absentee landowners. What will happen in the small landholdings is still unresolved.⁴⁶ The dilemma that faces a teacher, for example, is whether he leaves the teaching service to farm his land or remains in the service and loses the land.

One final aspect of Operation Land Transfer is the administration of the

⁴⁵ Information presented in Department of Agrarian Reform, "Highlights of Agrarian Reform Program Accomplishment, January-December, 1973," Diliman, Quezon City, January 7, 1974.

⁴⁶ See note 22.

program. When President Marcos issued PD No. 27, it was obviously no surprise to the land reform advocates. From an administrative point of view, it should have been a surprise because there was little or no data on land-ownership categories, tenants in these areas and amount of land.⁴⁷ This lack of empirical information has led to the postponement of the rules and regulation implementing the Decree.⁴⁸ As a result, policies are formulated in and transmitted by Memoranda from Secretary Estrella.⁴⁹ Things had gone fairly well because the Operation had concentrated on the large landholdings; however, the issuance of such rules and regulations are imperative now that the time for dealing with the smaller landowners is at hand. What has led an effective administrative approach has been the consolidation of participants under one command, the DAR. The Agrarian Reform Teams which are composed of one Team Leader, one Extension Supervisor, 5 or 6 Farm Management Technologists, 2 or 3 Home Management Technologists, 2 or 3 Rural Youth Technologists, and 1 Statistician are all employees of DAR so there are no divided loyalties. The command flow goes from the ART to the District Director to the Regional Director to the DAR Central Office. This consolidated command has enabled

problems to be aired quickly and solutions arrived at without any unnecessary delay. A problem, as is normal in all administration, is the proper personnel. This means more than just having the correct paper qualifications, but also the proper mental approach, an advocacy approach. An example prior to PD No. 27 is this statement by a farmer:

The Land Reform Chief in the town is Don Ninoy's (the farmer's landowner) sister's son. He says he puts his job first, not his family, and it is true he is very energetic and tenants on the other hand say he helps them. But tenants here are frightened to go to him because he is Don Ninoy's nephew and might not want to help us fight his uncle.⁵⁰

This is a case where the land reform man's loyalties are suspect and, therefore, counterproductive. The writer knows of an Agrarian Reform Team member in a municipality in a Visayan province, who is the son and a member of one of the biggest landholding families in the municipality. The writer's personal knowledge of the man would lead him to suspect that this particular fellow would not win any advocacy awards. However, there are few solutions to this problem as the number of qualified people is small and anyone can state that he believes in the program. As Operation Land Transfer intensifies country-wide, this problem will surely intensify. Carrying this line

47 Akira Takahashi, "Comment on B. de los Reyes Paper," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 97.

48 Jesus M. Montemayor, "Agrarian Problems and Prospects," *Solidarity*, Vol. VIII No. 5 (November 1973), p. 28.

49 For an example, see notes Nos. 27 and 28 above.

50 Quoted in Brian Fegan, "Between the Lord and the Law: Tenant's Dilemma," *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January April 1972), p. 125.

of thought further, it is common knowledge that the sons and daughters of landowners are the ones who go on to college and they are the people who form the pool of prospective employees for DAR. This problem arises out of the basic composition of society. The land reform program is essentially designed to change that basic composition and yet the success of the program must depend on people who stand to lose the most by the program's success.

Conclusion

Operation Land Transfer is proceeding successfully in Nueva Ecija. The reasons are that land reform operatives have been present in the province for quite a few years; there has been a tremendous amount of support channeled into the province as witnessed by the presence of NELRIDP; and there are a number of trained and properly motivated personnel. My contacts with officials in the District Director's office of DAR and the Project Director's office in NELRIDP, both in Cabanatuan, presented to me young, dedicated and intelligent men who were highly motivated. They were proud of their accomplishments and determined to push forward. Although there was pride evident, I did not get a feeling of satisfaction; instead, there seemed to be an atmosphere of "we can do better." I am sure the attitude of these leaders does have a positive effect on the implementation of the program. A sign hung on the wall in one of the offices proclaimed:

"the difficult tasks we do with ease, the impossible ones just take a little longer."

The success of Operation Land Transfer in Nueva Ecija augurs well for the accomplishment of overall land reform in the country again, if support continues at present levels.

When we make the leap from Nueva Ecija to the rest of the country, what conclusions can we make? First, the rest of the country did not receive the attention that Nueva Ecija did under R.A. 6389 and, therefore, little or no groundwork has been laid for Operation Land Transfer. Many rice and corn farmers in many provinces were still sharecropping up until Martial Law, in complete disregard of R.A. 6389.⁵¹ As a result, when Operation Land Transfer began a tremendous amount of basic land reform education was needed before the operation could get started. For example, a study by the DAR on farmers' reactions to PD No. 27 made in May 1973,⁵² stated that in Mindanao, it was only in Region XI (the Cotabato and Davao) that the majority of tenants were aware

⁵¹ Based on the writer's personal experience and on the statistics of leaseholders in 1971 as opposed to the total scope. See also Basilio N. de los Reyes, "Can Land Reform Succeed?" *Philippine Sociological Review*, Vol. XX, Nos. 1-2 (January-April 1972), p. 84.

⁵² Department of Agrarian Reform, "A Study on the Farmer's Reaction to the Present Agrarian Reform Program Brought Out (by) the Promulgation of the Presidential Decree No. 27, and Doubled as Operation Land Transfer," prepared by DAR Staff (undated). However, in the study, it is stated that the fieldwork was done from April 1 to 30, 1973.

of the Agrarian Reform Program, but even then, they had only limited knowledge of its implementation and their rights and responsibilities. In the Visayas, awareness ran to about 50 per cent of the tenants. To be fair, it must be remembered that the study was done only six months after PD No. 27. However, in contrast, over 70 per cent of Central Luzon tenants were aware of the program.

The question of support for the program countrywide can best be answered by data supplied by the DAR. As noted before, in Nueva Ecija, 85 per cent of all tenants under OLT have been identified and interviewed, whereas as of January 28, 1974, only 40 per cent of the tenants in all of the Visayas, and only 22 per cent of the tenants in Mindanao, were identified and interviewed. This is after more than a year of operation. It is more difficult to analyze the personnel input into the program country-wide. Anything said at this point would be speculation, but perhaps this input will eventually prove to be a very vital one.

As Pahilanga-de los Reyes and Lynch stated "the necessary root of all good

is money."⁵³ Is there enough money and is the government willing to spend it in agrarian reform to push the program forward country-wide at the same level it has supported the program in Nueva Ecija? Again, answers must be speculative. First of all, available money is tight, as evidenced by President Marcos' order to raise funds from various sources to subsidize fertilizers for food crop production.⁵⁴ The oil crisis and the continuing drain on resources caused by the troubles in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago must be reckoned with.

Nueva Ecija is proof that Operation Land Transfer can be prosecuted successfully with its attendant benefits to farmers. However, this success was purchased at great amounts of material, money and manpower. According to an old Chinese proverb, "a journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step." If Nueva Ecija can be looked upon as the first step, then Agrarian Reform in the Philippines is off to a good start.

⁵³ Pahilanga-De los Reyes and Lynch, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁵⁴ *Bulletin Today*, February 23, 1974, p. 1.