

Having observed differences in the extent of population pressure, the question that normally follows is: What do such observations mean? Do the high pressure areas, e.g. the Visayan provinces, Palawan, and scattered provinces on Luzon and Mindanao, have too many people, such that the only feasible solution of poverty is the removal of large numbers of people to low pressure areas? An affirmative answer to that question may not be given unless it can be demonstrated that no further improvements in the efficiency of the economy in the high pressure areas are possible. Poverty in agricultural areas may arise from exorbitant land rents, a defective credit system, inadequate marketing and storage facilities, and other factors that prevent the population from deriving an adequate living from the product of its efforts.<sup>2</sup> An inefficient or primitive economy, in fact, may result in wide spread poverty even in low pressure areas.

In short, population is seldom the only factor that lends itself to change, and it is seldom the most manageable factor. As the experience with resettlement programs has abundantly shown, the transplantation of substantial numbers of people is a slow and costly process. And if it is pursued without at the same time making basic changes in the economy, the relief achieved can be no more than temporary. The original problems reappear in the same form and in the same degree of intensity.

Terms such as population pressure and over-population should be used advisedly. At best they are relative terms, that is, relative to the existing organization of the economy there may be too many people. Often such terms reflect a policy position that has been arbitrarily adopted in order to preserve a convenient status quo. But the problem, as this paper has attempted to show, is usually more complicated than a simple condition of excess numbers of people.

<sup>2</sup> Farm tenancy is not necessarily a cause of rural poverty. In general, the frequency of farm tenancy varies directly with the productivity of the land, and in this respect the Philippines is not exceptional. It is rather the abuse of farm tenancy that produces poverty and the discontent so often associated with poverty.

## LANDLORDISM A WORLD ISSUE

CORNELIO M. FERRER

Social scientists, educators, men in the armed forces, religious leaders, and officials alike deplore the effects of landlessness upon the Philippines rural population. This social problem is universal. As a political issue in the Philippines, the slogan "land for the landless" was interchangeably used by all political parties and the present Magsaysay Administration is committed to a promise to tackle this national and world issue.

If the Philippines is bound to remain as a republic, it should be its policy to multiply her landholders as it is the policy of a totalitarian state to multiply its tenants.

Drastic but democratic land reform must be democracy's answer to Hukism. The Huk is "the product of a feudal system that has long outlived its usefulness." In the province of Pampanga, the birth place of Hukism, now commonly called Huklandia, 2 per cent of the people own 98% of the land. North of Pampanga is the province of Nueva Ecija, the rice bowl of the Philippines. The greater portion of the land under cultivation in Nueva Ecija is divided into 69 haciendas operated by farm managers of absentee landlords, each hacienda ranging from 100 to 3,000 hectares.

The majority of the almost one-million combined population of Pampanga and Nueva Ecija have been tenants all their lives and their parents and grandparents before them. They have not experienced the feeling of solidness and the joy which comes from the possession of a piece of land, however small, on which their home stands.

Tenancy is the natural outcome of concentrated landholding. Today tenancy and landlordism are two social forces which constitute a negative quantity in the social equation of a dynamic but restless rural population in Huklandia. Politically, landlordism in the Philippines is strong well-organized, and powerful in every administration since the Philippines became independent in 1946. The landless peasants, on the other hand, are voiceless and leaderless and Hukism wants to take up the leadership. Several laws were enacted by the Philippine government aimed to improve landlord-tenant relations but all are ineffective.

Associated with landlordism is usury. Interest paid by tenants on borrowed money is grossly onerous. Rates of 200% and even higher are common. The tenants are perpetually indebted with their landlord.

### BASIC SOCIAL THEORIES FOR DEMOCRATIC LAND REFORM

In advocating for democratic land reforms, it might be well for us to state here certain fundamental observations to help us understand the relationship of landownership and democracy.

(1) Perpetual tenantry under oppressive landlordism annihilates the love of country and weakens individual freedom. The landless tenant is artificially planted on the land. His status as a tenant kills his initiative to make permanent improvements on the land. He exploits the land but does not improve it. Being landless, he does not have social prestige in the community where he lives and it is but natural that he does not

take active part in the affairs of his village; he does not pay taxes for he has nothing to be taxed, hence he does not care to take active part in public affairs; he does not care who runs the government. He is not a supporter of the government. Life is hard in tenant communities and social stagnation is apparent in every phase of community living.

(2) On the other hand, the small landholders are the most precious part of the democratic state. They are strong supporters of democracy. The small landholders love freedom and they are vocal in expressing their opinions on every social, political and economic issues that affect their village. Being landholders, they pay taxes and therefore are supporters of the government. They love their barrio or village and their individual freedom makes them more assertive and independent in the exercise of their civil liberties and political freedom and they take active part in every election in order to replenish leadership in the government. Being small landowners, they have every initiative to put permanent improvements on their farms; plant permanent trees and build homes of strong materials. Naturally these small landholders love their community and would cooperate in every way to make their barrio or village flourish in industry, commerce, education and in every aspect of rural life.

(3) What happens to the land happens to the people and what happens to the people happens to the state. This is now taking place in Central Luzon where 70% of the people are landless. Communism is increasingly pressing its claims on rural people making promises to give every landless peasant a piece of land which they can call their own. Poverty, landlessness and oppressive landlordism make fertile soil for communism.

At the height of the Huk movement (1946-1950) life in Central Luzon was not safe. The landlords and the well-to-do members of the rural population were the first to evacuate to the cities for safety, taking with them their material wealth consisting of cash, precious stones, and jewels. Their flight to the cities resulted in the intense concentration of capital wealth particularly in Manila and in big towns. A number of the landlords who stayed on their farms were killed by the Huks. Some landlords at that time offered to sell their landholdings to the government but the Quirino administration utterly ignored the opportunity yet increased the budget of the army in its campaign for peace and order. Since then the budget of the army has been eating up almost fifty per cent of the national budget for the last seven years.

(4) Absentee landlordism has become an extractive enterprise upon rural society. To illustrate, take for instance an absentee landlord who owns say 7,000 hectares of rice land. From this concentrated landholding, the absentee landlord would derive an income of P350,000 annually at the rate of an estimated income of P50 per hectare. It may be more. The landlord takes this capital wealth of P350,000 from rural society and invests it in the cities. The landlords of the Philippines are heavy investors in real estate in the cities and in the construction of homes, apartments, and commercial buildings for rent. As a consequence of this annual flow of capital wealth from the rural to the city, the price of real estate in the cities went up because of the intense concentration of capital wealth in one place. As a further consequence, only the rich can afford

to own a home and a homelot in the cities. The laboring class are homeless. Therefore, tenancy in the cities had tremendously increased. Furthermore, this intense concentration of capital wealth to the cities resulted in the tremendous development of the cities to the detriment of the development of the rural towns and barrios which are being constantly depleted of capital and leadership.

(5) On the other hand, in rural areas where there is widespread landownership absentee landlordism does not exist. The small landholders live on their farms. The income of the farmer in excess of his needs remains in the community where he lives. Where there is widespread landownership communities are more prosperous and progressive than in rural areas where landlessness exists.

(6) Social surveys indicate that liberated tenants work four times harder on the farms that belong to them than when they were tilling somebody else's land. They have a new sense of belonging to the community improvement projects. Farm life becomes normal and individual freedom is fully restored.

#### ENLIGHTENED LANDLORDISM IN ACTION

Much of the writing about agrarian problems has assumed that progress in their solution had to come from the government and that an inevitable conflict existed between landlord and tenant. Actually private efforts may often be more fruitful than elaborate governmental projects and landlords may aid in the process of social readjustment. One of the tragedies of our times is the fact that the landlords, who are the best educated group in the country, have too often retreated from any concern with rural improvement.

This writer made a qualitative survey of the Hacienda Esperanza in Sta. Maria, Pangasinan and the report of this social survey which follows may serve as a clue or a stepping stone for democratic land reforms in the Philippines.

Hacienda Esperanza is owned by the heirs of the late Don Francisco Gonzales. Esperanza means "Hope". From the sociological point of view, the owners of the Hacienda Esperanza belong to what we may call "enlightened landlords" because of their sense of responsibility in stabilizing rural and community life in the hacienda. Hacienda Esperanza originally had an area of approximately 7,000 hectares more or less.

To promote peace and order, social stability, economic welfare, community life, the owners of Hacienda Esperanza had taken steps in 1934 for the sub-division of the best section of the hacienda into some 700 homelots. The area of each homelot is from 600 to 1,000 square meters to be sold to all bona-fide tenants of the hacienda on installment basis at nominal costs of 20 centavos per square meter. Those tenants who are capable of buying small farms besides the homelot, were also encouraged to do so and become landholders. These small farms ranging from one hectare to four hectares are carved from the hacienda and they are sold on cash basis. These small farms are sold at P2,000 per hectare for the first class land; P1,500 for the second class; P1,000 for the third class.

Furthermore, in order to develop a strong community life, the heirs of Hacienda Esperanza donated to the government twelve hectares for a

public square and for a school in the town site besides school sites for six barrio schools.

Tenants who are too poor to buy a homelot are allowed to occupy a 600-square meter homelot at a nominal fee of only P2.10 per year and farms are rented for P50 per hectare of the first class land; P45.00 for the second class; and P35.00 for the third class. The average income of the tenants from each hectare rented is from P800 to P1,000 a year.

This new deal initiated voluntarily by the heirs of Hacienda Esperanza made every tenant contented and happy. It is a great stepping stone in a democratic land reform on voluntary basis on the part of the landlords.

The social effect of this new deal in tenant-landlord relationship is far-reaching as may be gleaned from the following results:

- (1) The municipality of Sta. Maria was formed. It is one of the most progressive towns in Eastern Pangasinan.
- (2) Trade and commerce flourish.
- (3) The tenants who became small landholders have now a sense of dignity and a new sense of belonging to the community. They became more active and vocal in all matters affecting community life. Now they are tax payers and strong supporters of the local, provincial and insular government.
- (4) Increased production is noticeable everywhere. The new small landowners work harder, more efficient and independent than ever before.
- (5) Permanent homes are built; fruit trees are planted; homelots are fenced and beautified.
- (6) Landless peasants from near and far place migrated to the Hacienda and the population of Sta. Maria increased immensely in less than ten years.
- (7) The income of the town had increased and more public buildings were constructed.
- (8) The school population had increased and now farmers can afford to send their children beyond the elementary grades.
- (9) The standard of living is much improved.
- (10) Proper care of land is noticeable on every farm of these new small landholders.
- (11) Complete peace and order are restored and people are now living a natural and normal farm life. Hukism is unknown.
- (12) Churches of different denominations were established.
- (13) Tenants, part-owners and part-tenants, and the landlords are happy and there is no trouble in the hacienda since the inauguration of this new deal.
- (14) This new deal of enlightened landlordism has become the subject of interest of sociologists, educators, public officials and religious leaders.

#### LAND REFORM AND DEMOCRACY

We need drastic but democratic land reform if we are to have a healthy democracy in the Philippines. Landlessness and poverty breed radicalism and discontent. Let us use the freedom of our democracy to establish our landless peasants on the land to enable them to receive the

blessings of a normal farm life and the feeling of solidness and joy which comes from the possession of a home and of a piece of land.

In 1946 the Roxas administration tried to solve the tenancy problem in the Philippines by increasing the tenant's share of the crop raised on the farm to seventy per cent while the owners received only thirty per cent. However, this 70-30 tenant-landlord sharing formula was not a permanent solution of the tenancy problem. It follows the brickwall concept of economics: subtracting or adding one more brick in the wall does not alter the wall. The structure of the wall remains. So it is with the Philippine tenancy problem.

Before the purchase of the Tambobong-Buenavista Estate, one of the big haciendas formerly owned by the Church, there were several subversive peasant organizations within the hacienda. These radical organizations include: *Oras Na* (The Hour Has Come); *Walang Tanggi* (Always yes to Orders); *Sasama Ako Kung Darating Ang Labanan* (I shall Join When The Revolt Comes); *Panahun Na* (Now Is the time); and *Tangulan* (Defense).

After the purchase of the Tambobong-Buenavista Estate by the Philippine Government and its sale to the tenants at annual installments, these subversive organizations disappeared. Here is a clue to the solution of Huk problem in Central Luzon and how to fight communism at home.

In Japan General MacArthur did a very fine job when he ordered the transfer of land ownership from absentee land owners to the tenants at annual installments commensurate with tenant income which liberated 5,500,000 poverty-stricken tenants and small landowners from the economic bondage which has enslaved the Japanese farmer in centuries of feudal oppression. This drastic land reform in Japan has a direct bearing on the development of democratic institutions and the overall program of democratizing Japan.

We are a Republic and we are bound to continue so, and it should be the policy of republics to multiply their landholders as it is the policy of totalitarian states to multiply their tenants. "The small landholders are the most precious part of the state." Perpetual tenantry annihilates the love of country and weakens individual freedom.