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Agrarian Reform in Negros Occidental

VIOLETA LOPEZ-GONZAGA

This article provides an overview of the forms of land use and transfer schemes which have been conducted or are presently being undertaken in Negros Occidental. It first provides a brief historical background of this radical response to the century-old social and economic problems in the province, proceeds to delineate a number of models of organized effort at agrarian reform and then concludes with a summary of reasons which seem to affect landowners' attitudes towards land reform in Negros Occidental.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The earliest attempt to provide landless Negrenses access to land for their own agricultural production dates back to the Spanish era. Concerned with the poverty of his parishioners, Fr. Andres Ferrero, a Recollect friar, made representations to the Spanish colonial government for the assignment of land for his parish in Pontevedra to provide his parishioners a means of livelihood. As a result of his petition, more than one thousand hectares of land on the northeastern portion of Pontevedra in the south-central part of Negros was assigned to him. Called *Legua Comunal* by the zealous priest, the vast tract of land was apportioned among tenants who paid in the form of cash or crops. Unfortunately, no records can be found to attest to the name and number of the original tenants.

During the cadastral survey conducted in 1917, a decree was issued by the American colonial government formally ceding the Legua Comunal

This article was based on an exploratory study undertaken by the author from December 1985 through February 1986 on Voluntary Land Sharing and Transfer Scheme in Negros, and an ongoing study on the social-cultural and economic history of Negros funded by the Toyota Foundation.

to the municipality of Pontevedra. Presently, five barangays are situated within the Legua—Burgos, Gomez, Mabini, Buenavista and Rizal. Within each barangay at present are individual landholdings under a system of long-term inherited lease-right. Of the original area of more than one thousand hectares, a significant portion was designated for homestead patentholding by Presidential Act 2874 in 1925. Eventually, the excluded areas fell under the control of three families. The Uriartes came to control around 700 hectares which were acquired in recent times by Roberto S. Benedicto. All these titled lands have been excluded from the 716-hectare cadastral survey of the Legua Communal. Not long after the fall of the Marcos regime, the hectarage acquired by Benedicto was sequestered by the Aquino government with the intent of later assigning it to cooperative labor production by landless sugarcane workers.

Since its formation, the Legua Communal has undergone some basic transformations. Instead of the Church serving as "landlord," the municipal government stood in its stead. In the process, major portions of the original communal holding were appropriated by some influential families. In particular, an influential Spanish family came to control about 700 hectares of land of the original holding. With the remaining 716 hectares, the municipal government under the American colonial government extracted land rental from the peasants (who became small sugarcane and sundry-crop growers) in the form of land lease. Though officially identified as leaseholders, in practice, the peasants exercise their land rights as virtual landowners—handing down their rights to their children and mortgaging or selling their rights to others. Thus, through several generations, some of the original landholdings have passed from one family to another. Presently, only 567.39 hectares remain of the original land area in the hands of the descendants of the original leaseholders.

Of the 268 households in the Legua, a majority (72.4 percent) are small landholders with areas of 0.1 to 2.0 hectares. Those who control land beyond 10 hectares constitute only 1.9 percent of the total households in the Legua, while those who are without landholdings at all constitute 9.3 percent of the total household population. Of the total area of 716.08 hectares covered by the Legua, 203.6 or 28.4 percent is under the control of nonresident lessees (composed of nineteen individual holders). The remaining portion of the Legua has been set aside for school, barangay sites and roads.

Under the present municipal government, a resolution was passed to formalize the transfer of land to the leaseholders. In the proposed

scheme, a municipal committee headed by the mayor will negotiate with the Land Bank of the Philippines and other banking institutions to purchase the landholdings of the occupant-lessees of the Legua who in turn will assist in the amortized acquisition of land ownership by the long-term leascholders. Needless to say, the proposed scheme which was designed to generate much-needed funds to support the municipal government has created an uproar among the small agricultural producers. Having inherited the rights to occupy and till the land for years, a majority of the small growers consider the scheme a devious way of grabbing the land from them.

Other than the Legua, there is no record of wider distribution of individual land use in Negros neither under the Spanish nor the American colonial government. The rise of sugarcane production in Negros from the nineteenth century onward led to the concentration of landholding among the sugarcane planters, and the absorption of landless peasants into the hacienda labor force. Thus, even with independence, the plight of the assetless rural Negrenses, particularly the *duma-an*, the resident cane workers, remained the same. Among the first to break the pattern of land use by the hacenderos was Eduardo Locsin. As early as 1966, before any venture was made to organize the sugarcane workers, Locsin attempted to establish a governing body of his laborers. The initial efforts failed because the workers were not ready. But from 1968 to 1969, adult education and value reorientation seminars were held on the hacienda, as well as lectures on health and hygiene, child care and other aspects of the workers' lives. In 1969, the workers' governing committee was reactivated and became the key group working with Locsin for the transfer of ownership of his hacienda to his workers.

Five years after Locsin's initial attempt to organize his workers toward self-government, the National Federation of Sugarcane Workers (NFSW), began organizing in La Carlota, a southern municipality of Negros. The goal of the NFSW was land reform in the sugar industry, a goal which it believed could not occur apart from a basic restructuring of Philippine society. Under the aegis of the NFSW, several attempts were made to organize sugarcane workers into communes organized around leased lands.

The ideal behind the organization of the commune was the establishment of a community based on the principle of equality, shared social and economic responsibility and shared labor. The members were organized, into a general assembly with three working committees—the executive, production, and general services committees. The community building

(social education) component was designed to strengthen organizational and leadership skills, and the agribusiness component was designed to increase agricultural production. A retrospective study of the different efforts to organize a workers' commune indicates that a common factor leading to its dismal failure was the strong individualism of the members. As one of the union organizers expressed it, "self-interest came with it and commune life ended." Some worker-subscribers went to seek employment in the haciendas in the lowlands. The client members were "not satisfied with communal life . . . living conditions were not good, the communal house was crowded and dilapidated, and cash income from the communal farm was not enough for members' needs." Thus, though the initial pull of ideology was strong, a union organizer who worked with the project identified "lack of internalization of the principles of commune living" and the general suspicion of the commune as a "communist set-up" as the main factors leading to its untimely end.

COMMUNAL FARMING: THE KANDI-IS MODEL

Seeing conditions of the workers on her inherited farm, hacienda Kandi-is in Sagay, northern Negros, Sr. Michelle Gamboa, a member of a religious order, conducted a survey in the late 1970s to determine their needs and aspirations. A major result of the survey was the desire of the workers to have land that they could cultivate for themselves. Responding to this need, Sr. Michelle embarked on her own agrarian reform scheme which called for the initial transfer of 9.4 percent of her inherited land to a 'commune' composed mainly of workers. As envisioned, the final size of land to be transferred would depend largely on the production capabilities of the commune members. The recipients of the land grant, however, have to pay Sr. Michelle the token value of the land. For the initial 4.7 hectares transferred under their control, the long-term payment was ₱10,000 (U.S. \$500). After the formation of the commune, the members will be left to do things on their own with Sr. Michelle serving as consultant. The initial response to the call for the formation of the commune was not enthusiastic. This was caused by the fear among the beneficiaries of the risks involved in running a farm of their own, without the *amo's* continued traditional presence. Another cause for the workers' hesitation was their desire for individual rather than group ownership of land.

Although the project of Sr. Michelle is widely known as a communal farm, it is in reality a modified form of commune. The members farm

collectively a total area of 4.7 hectares, but at the same time, each household member has control of a 200-square-meter homelot which he cultivates privately. As promised, Sr. Michelle does not interfere in the day to day operations of the farm. The leadership of the commune is undertaken by fairly educated and committed members of the group. Although there is the usual bickering among the members, it is not considered serious enough to destroy the communal spirit. This is attributed to the kinship relationship among the commune members. One of the problems which they face is their image as "communist" to some rightwing local militia groups aligned with a political warlord influential during the Marcos regime. A major problem which they identify relates to their lack of economic resources to allow for flexibility and security in their living conditions. They have proposed an expansion of their commune holding to the more arable portions of the hacienda.

In preparation for possible future expansion, Sr. Michelle has planned nonformal education seminars and workshops on value orientation, technical skills' training and organizational skills' development to ensure the workers' preparedness for wider communal production. The goal for the commune, as expressed by Sr. Michelle, is the formation of a community which "allows the human person to maintain his individuality and identity, one which encourages man to think freely, motivate him to make decisions, and will allow those who have nothing to finally own property."

THE KRISTIYANONG KATILINGBAN

Closely related to the Kandi-is model is the Kristiyanong Katilingban (KK) commune or basic Christian community model. The present social structure of the KK evolved gradually over the years through the trial and error process of seeking to meet the needs of upland slash-and-burn agriculturists in Negros. The process started when Fr. Neill O'Brien built the "Sa-Maria house" in Oringao, Kabankalan in southern Negros. It was a combination retreat house and seminar center for the development of barrio leaders. Within this set-up, education programs in cooperatives, community organization, labor unionization, self-help for tenant farmers, legal and self-awareness seminars were instituted. Fr. O'Brien also instituted a farm project which "... started off with the idea of honestly run farm. It was only after we were already going that I realized what we had was a kibbutz—the way it was done in Israel."¹

1. As cited in Mark J. Ratkus, *Development and Philippine Basic Christian Communities* (Bacolod City: La Salle College, 1983), p. 26.

Their initial success in “community living” challenged Fr. O’Brien and his Columban associates to work for the development of the KK, using the *panimbahon*—the priestless service involving Bible reflection and community prayers, conducted by the men from the neighborhood which meets weekly. The *panimbahon*, led by one of the trained members of the Katilingban, strengthened the self-reliance of each KK community. The cohesion and self-reliance of the KK communities grew rapidly with the appointment of Fr. Brian Gore as pastor in Oringao, upland Kabankalan. Under Gore’s initiative, the *Konseho sang Kristiyanong Katilingban* (Council of Christian Communities) was organized for active politization of the upland farmers. The *konseho* provided the means for leaders from the different barangays to acquaint themselves with problems of the KKs from other localities represented on the council and to begin collective strategies to deal with them.

Under the guidance of Gore, the Katilingban was divided into eight basic Christian communities, each of which was organized into communal farms planted to rice and corn. Within each commune, the KK implemented a three-pronged approach in community development which included preventive health care, curative health care, and the common fund, all devised to solve health and economic programs, the KK communities set “securing justice” as a community goal.²

We look after all the needs of man—the spiritual, the economic, the political. That’s why we had demonstrations of 10,000 people at times to protest the abuses of the soldiers . . . We have fought for the land of a widow who couldn’t help herself and justice for our farmers who have been murdered . . .³

The KK’s goal for justice featured prominently in the case of the Negros Nine who were accused of the murder of Mayor Pablo Sola of Kabankalan and later pardoned through the pressure of public opinion, and the rallying of international bodies of human rights groups.

Like the union NFSW, the KK was subjected to extreme pressure from various interest groups especially in the southern part of Negros. These pressures came mostly from sugarcane planters who felt threatened by the increasing degree of self-awareness of the cane workers which inevitably led to militancy. This phenomenon was attributed to the

2. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

3. As cited in “Man with a Mission: Fr. Brian Gore,” *Columban Mission* 66 (January 1983):5.

education and politization programs of the Katilingban. Despite these pressures, the KK continued to work for the emancipation of the cane workers.

In 1973, Fr. O'Brien received a loan of ₱160,000 from an organization of British workers called "Oxfam." Proceeds from the loan were used to purchase a twelve-hectare farm in Barangay T, Kabankalan. The rest of the money was used for the acquisition of farm equipment and for operational expenses. This farm was placed under the ownership and management of the Christian Kibbutz Foundation, Inc. In 1977, two other areas in Tabugon, Kabankalan were purchased, thus increasing the Christian Kibbutz to three farms with an area of forty-six hectares. Aside from the land, the kibbutz also owns a tractor and three trucks. Membership in the kibbutz is voluntary. However, applicants are not accepted immediately. They have to undergo a six-month seminar to prepare them for kibbutz life. The seminar is handled by the KK, although the cost is shouldered by the kibbutz itself. Despite the seminar for potential members, the kibbutz has suffered from a high rate of turnover of members. This is attributed to the inability of most members to cope with the rigid policies of the kibbutz.

Except for the problem of manpower which limits the area cultivated to only 60 percent of the available land, the overall performance of the kibbutz during the initial years of operation has been relatively successful. The bank deposit has grown continuously through the years from the profits derived from production. On the other hand, the maintenance cost of equipment is minimized as this is rented out to other nearby farms, thus generating income to support its operation. Food within the kibbutz plants is ensured with the members' cultivation of root crops and vegetables in addition to their production of sugarcane.

THE TAGBANON WORKERS COOPERATIVE

Hacienda Tagbanon is a 109-hectare farm located in Cadiz City, Negros Occidental. Originally, Tagbanon was a 145-hectare farm which was owned by Manuel Gomez, then sold to the Victorias Company (VMC) together with Haciendas Candelaria and Navidad. However, since legal statutes limited the size of productive lands that a company could own, Tagbanon was put on sale and Don Carlos Loecin, a chemist of the company, purchased the hacienda.⁴ The first three years of the

4. This summary of the Tagbanon cooperative is based on a series of interviews and observations at Tagbanon with the workers and Eduardo Loecin, January 1986.

farm's operation from 1953 to 1956 were devoted largely to the development of land for sugarcane production. In 1957, Ed Locsin began his social development program in Tagbanon by allotting lots for piggery and poultry to every household. The workers were also encouraged to plant vegetables and other rootcrops in their backyards and empty patches of land for their subsistence. In 1963, Locsin began building, semipermanent housing for each worker in the hacienda with his father's assistance as representative of the VMC. Electricity, connected to VMC's central in Manapla, was introduced. This soon became the first successful rural electrification project in the country. The year 1966 saw the first attempt to establish a governing body composed of the workers of the hacienda. Owing to the novelty of the concept, this was not immediately successful. In its stead, Locsin organized different seminars and training sessions geared to educating and reorienting the workers' value system. The workers' governing committee was revived after the completion of the seminars.

In November 1985, the workers' association and Mr. Ed Locsin entered into a lease-purchase agreement for a 20.05-hectare portion of the hacienda. A remaining area of 88.95 hectares was maintained under the old lease contract. The lease-purchase agreement took effect in November 1985 and is to end in November 1990 at which time the association will assume ownership of the 20.05 hectares. Eventually the land of the association is expected to be redistributed among worker-members on an equal basis. The lease-purchase agreement is in line with the PLOW (Partnership in Land Ownership with Workers) program of the Chito Foundation, an entity organized by Locsin in memory of his only child who died in an accident. While PLOW assists member-planters in their land transfer scheme, it does not interfere in the process, but requires the members to sell the land to the workers at an amount not exceeding 50 percent of the prevailing market value.

In Tagbanon, the relationship between Mr. Locsin and the workers is simply that of lessor and lessees, with the latter taking full responsibility for farm operations. Mr. Locsin is determined to leave his *tawos* alone to discover for themselves the responsibility and pains that come with the exercise of human rights and freedom. Relationships between Locsin and the workers remain exceptionally harmonious despite the strains caused by the sugar crisis. The workers continue to see him for advice, no longer in the traditional *amo-tawo* relation, but rather as friends.

THE ORGANIZED WORKERS' FARM ASSOCIATION

The most recent mode of land sharing undertaken in the province is that of Social Ventures, a planters' group led by Fred J. Elizalde. By his own account, Elizalde approached the problem of growing insurgency in Negros like a true businessman.

From a businessman's viewpoint, if you're looking at why IBM succeeded, you have to look at IBM itself and find out what its strategies were, its philosophy. You have to ask why IBM is succeeding and the way to answer that is to go inside, look at its internal documents . . . The same thing applies to a political movement like the Communist Party of the Philippines.⁵

Having made a systematic study of the National Democratic Front's ideology, Elizalde believes that the only way to counter agrarian unrest is to deal with the heart of the problem—landlessness. For this view, Elizalde took his cue from Jose Ma. Sison who wrote:

The main social problems, the single problem affecting the greatest number of people, lies in the countryside. It is the land problem; feudalism and semi-feudalism oppress and exploit the poor peasant, the farm workers and the lower middle peasants. Without focusing on this problem and providing it with a solution, we cannot draw into the ranks of the revolution the most formidable force that can overwhelm the enemy. Agrarian revolution is the solution.⁶

Elizalde has undertaken the task of transforming his hacienda workers into "petty bourgeois," i.e., land-owning producers. By his definition, the penultimate task is to transform the sugarcane workers into "semi-small-commodity producers," giving them access to land or private cultivation and a viable loan package for agricultural production. Elizalde's prescription against revolution is not outright land grant but a subsidized land purchase scheme for the workers.

In brief, Elizalde's Social Ventures program which he pioneered in his own farm, runs as follows:

Workers' families in group size ranging between six to ten are encouraged to elect leaders. These leaders, in turn, select a president. The entire structure

5. Interview with Fred J. Elizalde, 10 January 1987.

6. CPP document, n.d.

then focuses its attention on a range of income producing projects such as livestock raising, hollow-block manufacturing or farming on plots of land which can be purchased at nominal prices.

As projected by the Elizalde group, land purchased under their scheme will be paid for out of profits from the target group's livelihood project funded by the "venture capital" for seeds, fertilizer and basic implements.

Similar to Elizalde's program is another land transfer project initiated by Edgardo Jalandoni, a planter with large landholdings in La Castellana. Jalandoni undertook the voluntary sale of 200 hectares of his land at a token price to his workers.⁷

In contrast to Elizalde who hired his own group of workers to implement his community development, Jalandoni turned to the Human Development Foundation (HDF) for assistance in the organization of his workers. Under the guidance of social workers of the Foundation, laborers in the two haciendas of Jalandoni (Rosario-Nato and Balatong) were organized into a cooperative for joint livelihood projects. For the purpose of facilitating the land resettlement of workers, an ad hoc committee of the farm workers was formed, comprising representatives from the mothers' group, youth group and fathers' group. To strengthen the organization and financial viability of his land transfer program, Jalandoni established the Ganet Foundation. The Foundation, whose Board of Trustees includes Jalandoni himself, his farm administrator, a priest and a Canadian International Development Officer, was endowed with the remaining 300 hectares of the hacienda partitioned for the project. The endowment was Jalandoni's way of ensuring a steady supply of capital from proceeds of agricultural production on the land, and technical assistance for the resettled workers.

A closer study of the support system would show Jalandoni's attempt to do away with his personalized role as "patron." This attempt to do away with the traditional patronage tie between him and his workers has led to conflict among his workers at Hacienda Balatong. Though given generous separation pay and a chance to own their homelot and an

7. The land transfer scheme was actually effected upon the closing of the sale of Hacienda Balatong to Ambassador Eduardo Cojuangco. With the sale of Balatong, Jalandoni's adjoining hacienda of approximately 500 hectares was partitioned for the resettlement of workers and its conversion to their privately owned farmlots. Of the 500 hectares, 200 hectares were apportioned for land transfer to the workers and 300 hectares for use in capital generating projects of the Ganet Foundation.

additional one-half hectare per family, the workers felt very insecure about the "future." A significant few, finding support from the New People's Army, have in fact openly resisted the management's program. In late December 1985, the dissenting minority appeared to have made headway, with the NPA's open support manifested in the killing of Jalandoni's farm administrator. The NPA, in a mimeographed circular distributed on 3 January 1986, explained that the liquidation of the administrator was carried out by the NPA due to crimes committed against the masses. The viability of the whole program, though, is seriously threatened by the NPA's intervention in the internal conflict among various factions of workers in the two haciendas.

Although the social concern of a significant number of sugarcane planters in the province has been awakened by the present crisis, most of them feel incapable of alleviating the condition of their workers because they themselves are in financial difficulty. The dilemma is further complicated by the realization that the long-term solution to the problem means the institution of radical changes that will eradicate the age-old dependency relations with the amo, and require some form of investment from the planter as well as the workers. For the planter, a basic question which he faces is the cost of changing the relations of production in his farm. The answer to this question has partly been dealt with during the past decade or so, by a number of planters who foresaw the social problems of the sugar industry, and thus initiated reforms within their own farms. Their voluntary social reform in the haciendas may provide some insights into the economics of land sharing.

MOTIVES FOR LAND SHARING

In the preceding section, an effort was made to delineate the range and types of models of land sharing and transfer schemes which have been tried and abandoned, or are in a "state of process." Based on a preliminary study, several factors may be identified which predispose sugarcane landholders to land sharing.

The guiding beliefs of a landholder are a key determining variable which may predispose or make him resistant to the concept of land sharing. Based on the case studies, a common variable among those who voluntarily went into land sharing is their "ideals." For the pioneers, the dominant world view was rooted in the basic Christian concept of social justice, the dignity of every human being created by God, and charity. This ideal was characteristic of Ed Locsin, the BCC organizers, Sr.

Michelle Gamboa (also of the PLOW-Assissi Group) and even the founders of the left-leaning labor union, the NFSW. At the other end of the ideological line were Fred J. Elizalde who, committed to the capitalist ideal, took a very pragmatic approach to the issue of land. For Elizalde, fear of an agrarian revolution and communist domination was the basic motivating force. Elizalde believes "the most effective way to counter communism is to show people how capitalism can work for them . . . the peasant (can) become a small, private producer with self-esteem and the confidence that he can turn capitalism to his own advantage."

Closely related to the factor of ethos was the planters' social group affiliation. A sugarcane plantation owner's association or formal group membership might be a contributing factor in his attitude toward land sharing. The preliminary case studies showed that the planters who opted for voluntary land sharing were active members of humanitarian, or community development oriented groups. Locsin and Gamboa, for instance, are both members of the Binhi, Chito and Assissi Foundations. Planters opting for land sharing were also members or affiliates of progressive business groups like the Negros Business Forum or the First Farmers' Human Development Group.

Individually-controlled lands are more likely to be subject to land sharing than those under family ownership. All lands allocated for reduced and assisted sale to workers (from Tagbanon through Kandi-is, Rosario-Nato and Najalin) were individually owned. It must be pointed out that the traditional landed gentry of Negros have deeply-rooted attachments to land. Traditionally, hacendero families maintain their prestige and sense of class identity through vast landholdings. Planters belonging to the older generation and who continue to control family landholdings are generally resistant to the concept of land sharing.

Another key variable which directly relates to the form of land ownership is the size of the landholding. Planters in control of one hundred hectares or more of land appear to be more responsive to the concept of sharing their land resource. All pioneer planter proponents of land sharing own a hundred hectares or more. Given this factor, it is expected that medium and large plantation holders will be more predisposed to voluntary land sharing than those belonging to the fifty-hectare-and-below category.

Childless planters or those with one-child families are generally more inclined to land sharing than those who have larger families. Based on the study, all individual planter-subscribers were found to be either childless

(as in the case of Ed Locsin) or belong to nuclear type of families whose membership does not exceed more than two children.

Planters who have diversified holdings, i.e., those who are not wholly dependent on their farms for their livelihood, tend to be more open toward variant forms of land sharing. The study shows that all proponents of land transfer have other sources of income or assets. A good example of this is Fred J. Elizalde, whose major assets are based not on his cane farm but on highly diversified outside holdings which range from majority ownership of La Carlota Milling Company through diverse industries, and control of a nationwide radio broadcasting corporation.

Once a planter is convinced of the social imperative for land sharing, a crucial variable which will finally lead him to actual land transfer is his access to outside capital, i.e., supporting funds vital for such expenditures as the organization of workers, training for nontraditional livelihood ventures, purchase of tools of production, seed, land input, etc. Since the typical Negrense planter is himself financially strapped, the provision of outside capital by assisting human development oriented groups is a vital factor in leading him to land sharing, and actual land transfer.

It is clear that only certain types of planters may be predisposed to voluntary land sharing. Therefore, it may take a longer period of time for the majority of the planters to come to voluntary division of a portion of their landholdings with their workers. The crucial question to ask at this point is how the initiative for agrarian reform set by members of the landed gentry themselves could be popularized among the more diverse groupings of planters.

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

Previous researchers have shown the dismal failure of government-initiated land reform in the Philippines.⁸ In his review of the development of postwar Philippine land reform, one researcher summarized the agrarian reform program as "a story of repeated initiative from the center of government that did not result in anywhere near the announced change

8. Cf. Antonio J. Ledesma, et al., *Second View from the Paddy* (Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, 1983).

in the countryside.”⁹ A casual analysis of the general failure of the government’s land reform program points to a host of factors—from insincerity and corruption of implementing officials through the political and economic interests of the top decision makers. Hung-Chao Tai, a political scientist, pointed out that political elites initiate land reform “to gain political legitimacy, i.e., to strengthen popular support for a new political order or to safeguard an existing regime against threatened political changes.”¹⁰

The history of land reform in the Philippines validates Hung’s analytical view. As Wurfel has shown in his study, Marcos undertook land reform in the early years of martial law “to create mass support for the New Society and its leader, legitimize him abroad, and undermine support for alternative leadership on both the right and left.” Yet, the implementation of Presidential Decree No. 27 which provided for “the emancipation of the tiller from the bondage of the soil” was half-hearted, resulting at best in incomplete reform. Analysts of Philippine politics believe that revolutionary political organization since the early 1980s resulted directly from “raised expectations and intensified frustration” of peasants who did not benefit from the incomplete reform.

Within the context of the plantation economy of Negros Occidental, the rapid growth of revolutionary forces has cracked the wall of planters’ resistance to any notion of agrarian reform. Recent developments in land use in Negros show a radical turn, with the private sector (the clergy, union organizers and planters) rather than the political elite taking the initiative for land reform. Contrary to Hung’s analysis, the planters who made the radical move are not out to safeguard an existing regime against threatened political changes.

In more recent times, however, the growing number of planters who subscribed to variant forms of land sharing, ranging from free land use of a portion of the hacienda by their workers through actual land transfer, did so for fear of the rapidly growing social unrest in the province. A few were forced to simply lend their lands to alternative groups like the BCC (Basic Christian Community) because of the breakdown of peace and order on their farms. Still others, especially those who owned cane farms

9. David Wurfel, “Historical Background: The Development of Postwar Philippine Land Reform: Political and Sociological Explanations” in Ledesma, et al., *Second View from the Paddy*, p. 1.

10. Hung Chao-Tai, *Land Reform and Politics: A Comparative Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 56.

in known NPA strongholds simply abandoned their farms, leaving their workers to fend for themselves by forced "sariling sikap."

One immediate provincial government response to the findings of the study on which this article is based is the sixty-thirty-ten proposition by the governor of Negros Occidental, Daniel Lacson. Under this program, sugarcane workers stand to gain access to 10 percent of all existing sugarlands that are mortgaged with the two government banks servicing the planters (the Philippine National Bank and Republic Planters' Bank). The 10 percent, equivalent to 26,700 hectares will be allocated to a land transfer scheme of 1,000 square meters per permanent sugarcane worker family residing in each mortgaged farm. This land transfer scheme will take 10 percent of a total of 107,000 hectares (40 percent of the existing sugarlands) earmarked to be taken out of sugarcane production in Negros Occidental. The remaining 30 percent is targeted for agricultural diversification through the formation of nucleus estates—a scheme whereby sugar mills can lease or buy the lands that were foreclosed by the banks and plant high value crops such as mango, pineapple, cacao, ramie, coffee, and process and market these crops. The land owners situated around these nucleus estates can participate as contract growers or stockholders of these nucleus estate, a divestment scheme will be provided to transfer its share to the tiller or worker, payable on an installment basis. As envisioned, sugarcane workers' cooperatives may gain access to eventual ownership of such estates.

In exchange for the 40 percent of sugarland accessed by the government in the form described above, the planters will be granted condonation of their bank surcharges and penalties, as well as long-term structuring of their loans. The more important aspect of the scheme offered to the planters is the retention of 60 percent of their land which stands in danger of foreclosure due to overdue sugar loans. As an initial step to negotiated land reform in Negros, the sixty-thirty-ten plan is viewed as the best form of compromise to benefit both impoverished workers and financially distressed planters in Negros.

Though liberation from poverty is still a far-off dream for the masses in Negros, a good beginning has been made towards agrarian reform. The momentum for change has begun with the private sector taking the initiative. In an island where the rural poor have known nothing but continuous misery, the new movement for change in Negros brings a renewed sense of hope and faith.