

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## **Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt**

Review Author: Luis Taruc

*Philippine Studies* vol. 20, no. 3 (1972): 531–534

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

the standpoint of ideology, it is still a long way behind *Pulang Tala*, which quite openly celebrated the successes of the New People's Army onstage.

But a play like *Citizen Juan* is nonetheless vital to the national democratic movement at this time. The problem of theater today is not to lay bare the injustice in our society; everybody is at least aware of that. The trick is to show that such injustices are already part of the system of relationships in the society, that they are not mere aberrations that can be blamed on man's concupiscence.

Because it has the power to lay bare the injustices in our society, and because it forces the audience to make their own conclusions (rather than force conclusions and solutions on them), *Citizen Juan* is more likely to succeed in winning over the uncommitted elements of the bourgeoisie. Most activist plays we have today are redundant; they are preaching to the already converted. *Citizen Juan* is one play that addresses itself to the uncommitted. And this is what we need right now.

ROYCE S. REYES

HUK: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt. By Eduardo Lachica. Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1971. viii, 331 pp.

It is not an easy task for me to review and comment on this book by Eduardo Lachica because in his work I appear as one of the principal characters and have been depicted as playing a key role in the shaping of contemporary developments. I have indeed played a not insignificant role in the drama of the nation, a drama continuing into the present and which still awaits a happy conclusion. Yet without the wherewithal to befriend the representatives of the mass media, the columnist, the politician, or the commentator who moulds public opinion, my own place and image in Philippine society has faded with the passage of time. A man in my position feels little consolation, for a lifetime thirst for justice is not readily slaked. Such are the thoughts which came to mind after reading Lachica's work *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt*.

If the accounts of past happenings are to provide elements of solution for present-day problems, such accounts must be accurate and objective. For this reason my own reflections, interpretations, and explanation of past events must be as objective and unslanted as possible.

Only in this way can the younger generation avoid repeating the mistakes of those who have gone before them. If we can avoid past mistakes while furthering the present accomplishments, then we may perhaps, say that some progress has been made.

*The Birth of The Huk Movement*

The Huk movement came to birth in the Tagalog provinces of Central and Southern Luzon where it grew in strength. The following are reasons why this should have been so.

1. The eight rays emanating from the sun appearing on the Philippine flag symbolize the eight provinces of Central Luzon and the Southern Tagalog region that mothered the KKK movement. These are the same provinces which are noted for a deeply ingrained tradition of patriotic struggle, and the Huk movement is, above all else, patriotic. It was born of the people of these two regions.

2. The Central Luzon and the Southern Tagalog regions have long experienced a certain national and class awareness, the first victims of the opportunism of foreigners and their lackeys.

3. The Pampangos are traditionally religious and peace-loving. Yet in Pampanga there is a gulf between the rich and the poor; most of the wealth is in the hands of a "fortunate" few who appear to look down on the poor. As a result, this movement of the underprivileged dug deep roots into the soil of Pampanga, for leaders of the poor came from all classes of society and united in a single movement dedicated to the betterment of the nation and the underprivileged.

4. The peculiar genius of the Pampangos is along artistic lines, be it in food, dress, shelter, music, literature, architecture, every form of beauty and of the finer things of life. This same passion for the good made them zealous revolutionaries, striving to attain in every possible way a richer and a fuller life for the nation. Thus, although the Tagalog provinces had a longer and more ingrained revolutionary tradition, it was not long before the Pampangos took the lead in the present popular revolutionary movement.

*The Leader and the Followers*

The history of every nation shows the tremendous significance of a leader who can embody and typify in himself the feelings, thoughts, aspirations, and capabilities of his followers. Not seldom is it the leader's own outstanding example which provides his followers with the fortitude to struggle for their goals. When the leader is decisive, yet not overbearing; when he does not shrink from the hardships and dangers to which his followers are exposed, the commitment and courage of every single follower is remarkably confirmed. If, besides, the leader is untiring, keeps encouraging his followers, and presents a clear and a solid program or organization toward national unity and economic upliftment, then his followers arrive soon enough at a deep awareness of issues and a real unity of purpose. Such was the late Pedro Abad Santos, a true leader and a man truly willing to share in the sufferings,

the risks and even the threats of death experienced by his followers. In turn, the latter have been known to have shown a charisma of leadership equal to that bequeathed by Pedro Abad Santos. In the last analysis, the HUK movement grew strong and sunk deep roots in Pampanga because of good leaders.

There were other provinces or areas of the Philippines where the masses had sunk deep in the morass of poverty. Had there been leaders there who had shown a willingness to suffer hardship, risked prison or even death, the masses certainly of the poor, at least those with any insight and conscience, would have associated themselves in a similar movement. Leadership by example is what was lacking, a leader known for his deeds, not just for his declamations, not the pseudo-intellectual, long on theory but short on action, totally out of touch with the real conditions of the nation.

#### *A General Evaluation of Lachica's Book*

The broad outlines of the exposition by Mr. Lachica are basically correct. On certain points, he appears to have bent over backwards to avoid seeming to be pro-HUK or to favor the Socialist-Communist view. One may perhaps attribute this to his opportunistic or conservative inclination. Never once did the author clearly lay before the reader the real root problem of the Philippines, namely, a complete domination by imperialist America of our economy and politics, a domination embracing also our education, culture, journalism, the army and the police, even our foreign policy. Such a situation has come about because those in power have been large land holders (Feudalism) and monopolistic capitalists, who have continuously advocated the build-up of military power (Fascism) in order to maintain the *status quo*.

On the other hand, the present confusion, vagueness and lack of a clear-cut ideology on the part of those armed HUK units which have associated themselves with Sumulong are merely the frustrated residue of the original Freedom Movement. They have wandered from the right path. The true understanding of the Freedom Movement can only be had by a really objective investigation of historical developments.

An additional omission of Lachica's is the basic fact that the whole world is divided into two, each of them seeking renewal. Renewal will come; it is unavoidable. The developing nations are heading either toward Marxist Socialism or toward National Democratic Socialism; along a road of totalitarian dictatorship, or a road of real freedom and national democracy.

#### *The Solution*

Since 70% of our population live in the rural areas, agriculture is a key element in the problem of poverty and want. Clearly, land re-

form and rural development is the problem demanding top priority attention, taking precedence over the question of industrialization and poverty on a national level. If the barrio folk are well-off, the unemployed will be able to find work, for the barrio is the home market of the products of local industry.

And concurrent with this economic progress, our electoral system must be free and honest so that the reins of government are controlled by the true representatives of the people.

We will have a lasting peace only when each individual citizen is concerned with preserving it, and surely this will not come about until they enjoy prosperity, freedom and justice.

All in all, Lachica's book is a significant challenge for the Filipino people to face up to and shoulder their responsibility. If they refuse, there is at hand another group willing to face fearlessly any danger in order to save the nation from the continuing negligence of those who do not wish to live up to their responsibility.

LUIS TARUC

**STARTING POINTS.** Poems by Arthur Lerner. Los Angeles: The Swordsman Publishing Company, 1971. 72 pp.

If the province of poetry is life, then a poet's task is never ending. No sooner does a reflection from the prism of existence appear than it disappears. And constantly, in the contemporary idiom of Arthur Lerner,

The poet works  
on unknown roads  
scenting his way  
like an alley cat  
scrounging and sniffing  
and scrawling for words  
to heighten the path  
and lighten the load.

An illustration of what a poet's business is all about is *Starting Points*, the most recent collection of Lerner's poems. It consists of three parts, each ultimately considers the nature of man. But more specifically, *Starting Points* probes human consciousness; much in the manner of a psychologist. Which is what its author is. Holder of two Ph.D. degrees (in Psychology and in English), he is a Professor of Psychology in Los Angeles City College.