

The Revolution Falters: The Left in Philippine Politics after 1986 - Preface

Wednesday 15 April 2020, by [ABINALES Patricio N.](#) (Date first published: 2 January 2019).

This collection explores the difficult development of the Filipino left after 1986.

The papers represent the first attempt ever to bring together in one collection the works of scholars specializing or interested on the Philippine Left and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). They are notable not only for their particular topics, but also for the diversity of their authorship: two Americans, an Australian, a Filipino, a Dutch, and a Swede. Their background as well as their particular area focus (Filipino Marxist theorizing, peasant politics, elections, urban social movements, and purges and executions) has helped bring about a more nuanced examination of the collection's main topic: understanding the causes behind the current crisis of the Philippine Left. All begin with the 1986 "boycott debacle" of the CPP and proceed to elaborate on the problem based on their specific areas of interest.

The portrait that these papers have drawn shows a Left that has made an enduring mark on Philippine society. Revived mainly by students and intellectuals in the late 1960s, the Left was able to grow despite adverse conditions after Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law. Its forces rapidly spread all over the Philippines, making its presence felt as rural guerrillas, union and community organizers, students and even Church activists. In the last years of martial law, it had become so prominent a political force, that most Filipinos regarded the polarizing politics of the moment as inevitably climaxing in an epic face-to-face confrontation between dictatorship and revolution. This never happened. Instead, "cacique democracy" supplanted the dictatorship and marginalized the revolution. Why this scenario never transpired has generated an intense debate within Left circles and spurred renewed scholarly interest on Philippine radical politics outside of the Philippines. [1] The essays in this collection constitute perhaps the second wave of studies that try to probe further on the issues elaborated by earlier works and explore previously unstudied areas of Left-wing politics. The hope of the authors of this collection is that it would bring about more interest to study what may be the last of the left-wing movements in Southeast Asia.

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Contemporary Philippine Leftist Politics in Historical Perspective by KERKVLiet Benedict J. Tria

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article52920>

From Vanguard to Rearguard: The Theoretical Roots of the Crisis of the Communist Party of the Philippines by WEEKLEY Kathleen

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article52932>

Of Motorcades and Masses: Mobilization and Innovation in Philippine Protest by BOUDREAU Vincent G.

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article52942>

Beyond Boycott: The Philippine Left and Electoral Politics After 1986 by *HEDMAN Eva-Lotta E.*

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article5296>

Popular Support for the Revolutionary Movement CPP-NPA: Experiences in a Hacienda in Negros Occidental, 1978-1995 by *Rosanne Rutten*

<http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article52978>

When a Revolution Devours its Children Before Victory: Operasyon Kampanyang Ahos and the Tragedy of Mindanao Communism by *Patricio N. Abinales*

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Patricio Abinales

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P.S.

This collection is the product of a panel, a fax message, and e-mail. Four of the papers (by Abinales, Boudreau, Hedman, and Weekley) were originally presented at a panel on the Philippine Left organized by Vincent Boudreau and Patricio Abinales for the 1994 Association for Asian Studies General Meeting at Boston. Benedict Kerkvliet's was a written comment sent from Australia on three (Abinales, Boudreau, and Weekley) of the panel's papers, which he later on expanded into the collection's introductory essay. Finally, e-mail acquaintance with Rosanne Rutten eventually led to her contributing her piece on Negros.

Authors in this volume have used their own discretion in choosing when to capitalize names, such as "the Left," or "the Party," which describe broad-based political organizations.

Each of the authors has thanked individuals and institutions who have helped them in the writing of their respective essays. I wish to thank Benedict Tria Kerkvliet for taking time out of a busy schedule to write a response to the AAS papers, and then expanding this commentary into a full piece for this collection. In this preface, all of us express a collective gratitude to the Cornell Southeast Asia Program, especially its Editorial Board, and to Deborah Homsher, the Program's Publications Editor, for making this anthology possible.

We dedicate this book to Audrey Kahin, Dolina Millar, Roberta Ludgate, Hazel Prentice, and Saya Shiraishi.

Footnotes

- [1] Prior to 1986, Filipino activists and academics had already written extensively on the Left. See, Armando S. Malay, "The 'Legal' vs. the 'Illegal': Problems in CPP-ML Strategy and Tactics", *Asian Studies*, 20 (April-August 1982); Francisco S. Nemenzo, "Rectification Process in the

Philippine Communist Movement," in Lim Joo-Jock ed., *Armed Communist Movements in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Institute for Southeast Asian Studies, 1984); *Marxism in the Philippines: Marx Centennial Lectures* (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, 1984). These continued after 1986, and some of these later works are cited in the essays. Among the post-1986 studies by non-Filipinos, the following are the more important: Gareth Porter, *The Politics of Counterinsurgency in the Philippines: Military and Political Options*, Occasional Paper No. 9 (Honolulu: Center for Philippine Studies, University of Hawaii., 1987); Gareth Porter, "Philippine Communism after Marcos," *Problems of Communism* 36, 5 (1987); *Marxism in the Philippines*, Second Series (Quezon City: Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, 1988); Gareth Porter, "Strategic Debates and Dilemmas in the Philippine Communist Movement," *Pilipinas* 13 (Fall 1989); Gregg R. Jones, *Red Revolution: Inside the Philippine Guerrilla Movement* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989); and Walden Bello, Crisis of the Philippine Progressive Movement: A Preliminary Investigation, *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies* 8,1 (1992).