

# AMPO

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## Building a People's Economy



Looking for  
Clues on  
Negros  
Island

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## TO OUR READERS

**T**he creation of a people's economy is one of the serious tasks facing people's movements today. It has always been a weak point, and it is therefore crucial for us to share our trials and errors in this area. In the following pages we have brought some explorations on this theme from a variety of positions: autonomous worker's production, alternative livelihood coops, and alternative trade. These are all important facets of an alternative program, but all contain difficulties as well that we need to confront. In particular, the various questions involving power relationships: producers vs. consumers, and North vs. South, are issues that need to be fully explored. The people's economy is, after all, still a small island surrounded by the ocean of the market economy and the existing power system.

We've taken the example of Negros Island in the Philippines as a starting point for the search for alternatives. In Negros one can see, every day, a clear struggle going on between what Douglas Lummis calls "managed poverty"—the system of monocropping, monoculture and militarization, on the one hand, and people's struggles for just alternatives on the other.

Several reports from PP21 Thailand, which came to a successful close in December 1992, show another way in which Asian and other peoples are working to propose a people's alternative to the existing international society. The PP21 process, however, has taken place during a period in which the North has increasingly tried to dominate the world system in the name of a "New World Order" and the "free market," using the international institutions such as GATT, the World Bank and the IMF to maintain a system in which slavery and oppression are "necessary evils," and really a part of managing people into poverty. In June 1993, the leaders of the capitalist world will gather in Tokyo to hold a Summit of the G7. At that time, we will hold our own gathering, with other Japanese groups, in the form of an "International Tribunal to Judge the G7." We hope this meeting will provide impetus for popular movements working to overcome the oppressions and exploitations so evident in our world today.

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# Autonomous Production

## An Interview with Tsuzuku Ken

*Toshiba Ampex was a Japanese-American joint venture set up in 1964. At that time, Ampex held 60% of Japan's industrial VTR market. The company's next goal was to sell machines on the home market, so the management set up a joint venture with Toshiba. Both Toshiba and Sony wanted to get the contract, but Toshiba eventually won. Business went well for the first five years, and they were hiring more than 100 employees each year.*

*In 1972, however, because of its failure to develop new products, the company had to stop producing its home video recorders and laid off many workers. The union resisted this and the company started working to break up the union.*

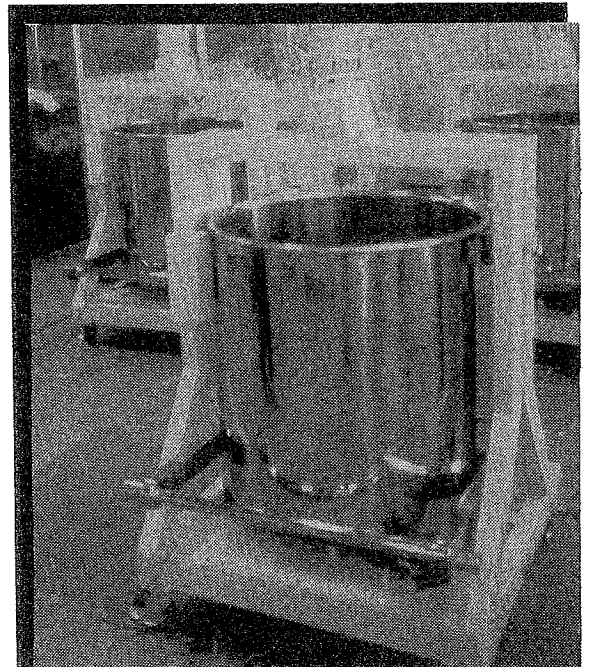
*Then, the factory was closed down. This was done intentionally in 1982 in order to crush the union. The workers were dismissed and they filed a case against the company. At the same time, the union started to manage the workplace. They started their autonomous production in 1983, setting up a new company called TAU Technical Laboratory Co., Ltd. (TAU Giken). They won a court victory in October 1990, and gained possession of part of the company's grounds (990 m<sup>2</sup>), building, and machines. The company currently has 30 employees.*

*TAU Giken has manufactured some interesting products such as geiger counters (initiated after the Chernobyl disaster), machines to produce natural soap, and more currently washing machines that use smaller amounts of soap than commercial models. Tsuzuku Ken is the president of TAU. He was one of the key organizers of the Toshiba Ampex Union.*

**I**n the beginning, our plan was not based on autonomous production. Everything started from the company dismissing us, so our first step was only passive. During the struggle, we felt some emptiness because our aim was just to get rehired. Whenever we confronted company people, they would just repeat that the decision to lay us off was made by management, and that they had no power to overturn this decision. We began to think that it would be better to run the company ourselves.

Little by little we stopped wanting to go back to the way things had been before. Toshiba Ampex was a very big company, and we knew that even if we were rehired, nothing would have changed from the way things were before our struggle. That is why we chose the path of "autonomous production" and autonomous control.

Even before the order came down to dissolve Toshiba Ampex, the union was already trying to gain hegemony over the workplace. This was our policy from the very beginning. The company side,



*Soap-producing machine at TAU Giken*

however, wanted a union which would be cooperative with the company, wanted to use the union as a substructure to control the workers. As a union, we wanted to take the initiative in the workplace.<sup>1</sup>

After Toshiba dissolved our company and we lost our jobs, however, we had to find a way to survive. We thus started our "autonomous production" spontaneously. It was only through discussions that we developed the theory. And this took a long time. In fact, we had no choice but to do produce whatever was ordered in order to survive.

As an individual, I was in charge of getting orders, so I tried hard to find ones which were interesting and fulfilling, but we still had doubts about the meaning of what we were doing. During our discussions, other people asked me to give them the chance to choose their own jobs and ways of working. But there simply weren't any jobs that responded to their demands. During the first stage, we spent much time and money winning our labor struggle. Then, after eventually winning, we found that we had enough time to start considering the meaning of autonomous production. During the struggle, we were nervous and felt unfree — we were facing difficulties even surviving.

### The Difficulties of Autonomy

As a way of managing production, we still have some problems. For example, in terms of wages, we have simply taken the system we were using under Toshiba Ampex and are currently working to reform it. In terms of pricing decisions, we can set our prices, but we are still doing business in a capitalist society, and we have to negotiate with our business partners. We try not to do so in a bureaucratic way, but cannot transform our operation into a truly democratic way. It therefore takes a long time to make any decision.

In terms of management, we have four sections, and the workers of each group select a steering committee member from among themselves. Then all the workers have the chance to vote for their confirmation. The successful candidates are not necessarily suitable to be in management. But the management itself cannot always go along with the workers' demand. It is very difficult to ride over this contradiction.

Making working places democratic and making products that have value to society are key points for alternative business. But most factories

like ours are doing subcontracting, so we are very vulnerable. The factories become isolated and cannot gather power to oppose big business.

### Alliance with Other Factories

In order to solve this problem, we are planning to establish a network of autonomous production factories to allow us to share ideology and the reality of our workplaces. The aim of this group will be to establish an economic space composed of factories in various manufacturing industries. After all, the big businesses have their own networks. The point for us, though, is that the ideology of this network should always reflect the reality of workers. The ideology should not go beyond that reality.

Our factory is currently producing natural soap machines, and this work is an example of the second type of contribution, of making a product that is valuable to society. This kind of soap machine was first made by the people in Minamata. We reformed their design, and made a second type. The one we are making now is more expensive than the former kind. Now the people in Minamata are planning to change their process and make their product cheaper.

Now, if we really wanted to compete with them, we, as technology specialists, would be able to redesign ours and sell it cheaper. But we will not. This is because we believe that products should be produced in the community and used in the community. We need to respect each other, a sort of territorial method. In other words, they should produce for their region, and we should produce for ours. When we produce a soap machine, its qualities should vary according to the specific place. Machines to be used in Hokkaido, for example, should have the capacity to keep high temperatures.

We do not only produce in the market economy. We can compete with each other but at the same time can cooperate or share. In general, the weak point of autonomous production is quality. On this point the existence of our company, TAU Giken, can have a special meaning.

- 1) This union was jointly established by the workers and the company in 1971. There was a need for both sides to establish the union at that time. But in 1978, the company made a second union. ■



# The Alternative Livelihood Movement

By Muto Ichiyo

*The following is an abridged version (half of the original) of a chapter from Muto Ichiyo's unfinished book on the Japanese people's movement since the 60s, the first part of which was carried in three successive issues of AMPO eight years ago titled "Beyond the New Left." (AMPO Vol. 17 Nos. 2-4). This will constitute part I of the book. Part II of the book will deal with the 1970s, characterized by the mushrooming of struggles waged primarily by peripheralized communities against pollution and major "development" (kaihatsu) projects destructive to the environment and living. The struggle of the Sanrizuka farmers against the Tokyo International Airport project and the struggle by fisherfolk and other people of Minamata against mercury poisoning by Chisso Co. had a strong impact on all of society, and like two poles of an ellipse demarcated a sphere of gravity in which numerous community-based grassroots struggles that characterized the decade situated themselves in mutual recognition. The women's liberation movement also arose in this period, sinking a sharp scalpel into the ailing parts of postwar Japanese society.*

*Part III, to which this chapter belongs, tells of the rise in the 1980s of what Muto calls "life politics" which focuses on ecological concerns, the transformation of everyday life, and the building of alternative systems. Such concerns had already been born in the midst of the previous decade — in anti-pollution community struggles, Minamata, women's liberation, in the extremely confrontational Sanrizuka struggle and even in the campus struggle where the transformation of everyday social relationships was at stake. In most of these struggles, however, these concerns and accompanying practices were ancillary to the confrontational features, and were not given a full, legitimate place of their own. In the 1980s, these concerns and values came to the surface, asserting themselves as a new and independent basis of social movement. Typical of such alternative life movements is the cooperative movement which developed rapidly in the 80s, creating direct links between consumers and producers, stepping into the arena of local politics, and involving hundreds of thousands of women, mostly housewives, who would otherwise have stayed away from any movement participation. The chapter abridged below deals with two typical and powerful alternative livelihood coops to show some features of "life politics."*

## Major Alternative Livelihood Coops

Japan has a long tradition of consumer cooperatives. The first was organized as far back as 1879 in Tokyo and Kobe following the model of England's Rochdale cooperative created in the Owenian tradition. In the post-WWI period, studded by major labor disputes, fairly large consumer cooperatives were organized mainly to support workers in struggle by providing low-priced foods and daily necessities, but they met harsh government repression for their role in labor disputes. Together with other progressive groups, the prewar consumer cooperatives disappeared under the militarist rule of the late 1930s.

In the postwar period, consumer coops revived, based in both residential areas and trade

unions. College campuses also came to have student coops. Japan now has one of the best developed and active consumer cooperative movements in the world. As of 1991, 2,000 consumer cooperatives had a total of 14 million members. (*Asahi Shimbun*, Aug. 23, 1991)

But the alternative livelihood cooperatives, which are different from the traditional coops, emerged as a new phenomenon in response to the social climate of the 1970s. Most of the large traditional community coops had long before become bureaucratic, commercial organizations closely resembling supermarket chains. Their concern was to build big, increase the turnover of goods and increase profits and dividends, and their main appeal was cheap goods. They didn't question

consumer culture itself.

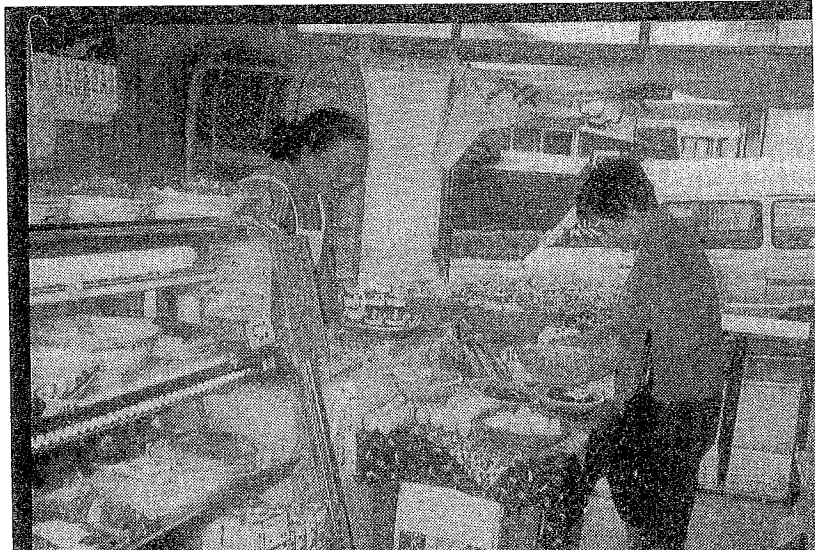
In contrast, the new coops that emerged in the late 60s pursued entirely different goals — safe foods instead of cheap foods, soap instead of synthetic chemical detergents, an alternative, modest way of life instead of consumerism.

Muraoka Isotsugu, a leader of the Green Coop, a typical alternative livelihood coop based in Kyushu, explained the difference between the traditional coops and the new ones:

“The traditional prewar coops were to serve consumers by offering cheap goods while union-supported ones considered their activities merely supplementary to union activities. We considered the coop movement to be a social movement in its own right, a movement projecting its own social values. We had doubts about the left movement style of work and values, so we pursued new values as opposed to values of the Left.”

Coops of this type (let me call them alternative livelihood coops) have been built into large organizations, embracing more than a million members. The best known is probably the Seikatsu Club Coop based mainly in Tokyo and its neighboring areas, whose membership started with a modest 1,200 in 1968 but grew 10 times to 12,000 by 1972, almost 10 times again to 103,000 by 1983, and more than doubled to 220,000 by 1990. Concomitantly, the organization's collective purchases jumped from ¥13 million (\$100,000) in 1968 to ¥20 billion in 1981, and then to ¥60 billion (\$470 million) in 1990. It is already an economically meaningful player on the national consumer market.

The Green Coop is a relatively new body created through the merger of two major coop networks in Kyushu, one originating in Kumamoto and the other in Fukuoka. When it was founded in 1988, it had 160,000 members all over Kyushu, and by 1991 its membership increased to 200,000 people affiliated with 28 constituent coops in towns throughout Kyushu as well as in Yamaguchi and Hiroshima Prefectures in western Honshu. The value of their collective purchases amounted to ¥45 billion (\$350 million) in 1990.



*A coop-run worker's collective in Chiba Prefecture*

These coops are impressively equipped with roomy offices, computer centers, meeting halls and community centers, complete with large goods distribution centers where food fresh from producers is packed into small family parcels. They are veritable packing factories, handling all sorts of daily necessities. Fleets of vans deliver parcels door to door or to unit distribution places. Green Coop has 700 full-time staff and Seikatsu Club 800 in addition to hundreds of “part-timers.” They are no-nonsense business ventures.

### **The Green Coop**

The case of the Green Coop shows well the legacy from the New Left period. One of its two ingredients, the Kyoseisha (Convivial) Coop came right from the fires of the Zenkyoto struggle on the campus of Kumamoto University (Kumadai). Its organizer, Yukioka Ryoji, who is now a co-managing director of the Green Coop, was the chairperson of Kumadai Zenkyoto in the early 70s and an activist of the Maoist Bund ML faction. The Kumadai Zenkyoto struggle, which involved student occupation of the campus and fierce confrontation with the police, was in fact triggered by the university authorities' hostile and discriminatory treatment of the campus student cooperative. Yukioka, a leader of the cooperative, was chosen to chair Zenkyoto. He resigned from the coop leadership in order to avoid implicating the coop, while his colleagues, in full understanding of Yukioka's political role, maintained normal cooperative opera-

tions. Yukioka was arrested in 1969 and spent a year in prison. When he got out in 1970, the Kumadai cooperative had started to organize community coops in Kumamoto and warmly received him again as its leading member, giving him the task of organizing extra-campus networks. Kumamoto Kyoseisha Coop was thus founded in 1974.

Kyoseisha expanded rapidly throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, winning the support and participation of young mothers all over southwestern Kyushu. To Yukioka and the other founders, Kyoseisha was a community movement rather than simply a consumer cooperative. In fact as women in the communities gathered to form Kyoseisha, many felt that for the first time they had an organization of their own, that they had acquired leverage to change circumstances. They began to act.

Kyoseisha as well as other "soapist" (a word that derives from their campaigns for the use of soap instead of detergent) cooperatives developed in this environment. But in the process a peculiar contradiction also developed, according to Yukioka. A cooperative of this type is based on collective purchases of consumer goods, and this requires business expertise and know-how. On the other hand, it is the members, all housewives, who have formal sovereignty over its operations. The board members are elected by and from among the members, who are lay persons in handling supermarket type business. This is why the traditional cooperatives are trapped and easily become supermarket chains and their members mere customers. The usual way to avoid this is to try to create cooperative zealots from among the ordinary members who devote themselves to the management and expansion of the cooperative. Yukioka said he had refused to follow either of the two lines. To him, Kyoseisha was essentially a movement shaped as its members chose, not just a device through which health foods could be obtained and consumed. Kyoseisha, according to him, should be a political movement shaped as its members de-

cid. "So, I decided to be the manager, taking upon myself all the responsibility for the business side, in order to let Kyoseisha members act freely without constraint," he said. "Look at supermarkets. Successful ones are successful without their customers obtaining new customers. Why should a cooperative mobilize its members to increase membership?"

This sounded slightly paternalistic, but what he meant was that Kyoseisha was not an end in itself. Functionally a consumer cooperative must do business. But its member housewives, once organized, want to do more than buying and managing, using the cooperative as a vehicle for ecological activities, for example. Such activities

are harmonious with the coop's goals and can well be conducted in the name of the coop, though they have nothing to do with commodities. Yukioka encouraged spontaneous activities of members. This policy, totally heretical in the world of cooperatives, in fact released the members' energies. Women in the communities who organized and set up au-

tonomous movement bodies for the first time in their lives had great urges to act, to shape and reshape the reality within their reach as they chose, and they did begin to act freely in the name of Kyoseisha. By 1984 Kyoseisha had become a vivacious, dynamic, multi-faceted movement of women (mostly mothers in their thirties and early forties) rooted in communities. According to Yukioka, it became a "formidable force nobody could ignore in Kyushu" with 3,000 activists among its 70,000 members.

The other ingredient of the Green Coop, Chikuren (Regional Cooperatives Federation) originated in the Kyushu University (Kyudai) student coop. This too came from the campus struggle at Kyushu University, but compared with Kyoseisha, was more orthodox in its style. Kaneshige Masaji, now a co-managing director of Green Coop together with Yukioka, was a born coop man at Kyudai during his student days. But

*Most of the large traditional community coops had long before become bureaucratic, commercial organizations closely resembling supermarket chains.*



Chikuren too came out of the Zenkyoto struggle.

Unlike Kyoseisha, Chikuren, which started in the city of Fukuoka, did not separate movement from management. In the words of Muraoka Isotsugu, it aimed to build a cooperative movement rather than a consumer cooperative. Then what are the visions and goals of the cooperative movement? Is the cooperative supposed to take over the existing social system? Muraoka, who organized a Socialist Youth League branch at Kyudai campus during the Zenkyoto days, has not fully evolved his vision of a future cooperative society and the role consumer coops can play in building it. Talking about workers' production coops related to the Green Coop, Muraoka said that this type of self-managed operations could penetrate areas in which work formerly done in the household is being replaced by commercial services, but how steel mills, auto plants, and the like were to be managed should be examined completely separately. "Probably, coops would not be the way."

From the beginning, Chikuren coop tackled issues handed down from the early 1970s — discrimination against women, minorities, Buraku people, and the handicapped, pollution, agricultural issues, peace, environment, and international solidarity. It developed into a large network, radiating from Fukuoka, to encompass northeastern Kyushu.

In the 1980s, the time was ripe for the creation of a new network through a merger of the two major groups. Otherwise, the two large coop movements might engage in futile competition. The 25 cooperative units embracing a total of 150,000 members merged into Green Coop in March 1988 in clear anticipation that the interaction of the two largely heterogeneous networks would produce a cross-fertilization effect.

Cross-fertilization seems to have occurred. Green Coop has not only increased its membership but also enriched its activities: it went into Third World solidarity work by inaugurating alternative trade with organized petty banana growers in Negros Island of the Philippines through the creation of Alter-Trade Japan Inc. together with other livelihood organizations. It has also established extensive ties with other Asian producers' and consumers' movements including south Korean groups, activated workers' production cooperatives, participated in a multi-sectoral alliance forming process known as the People's Plan for the 21st Century, took action against the Gulf War, and

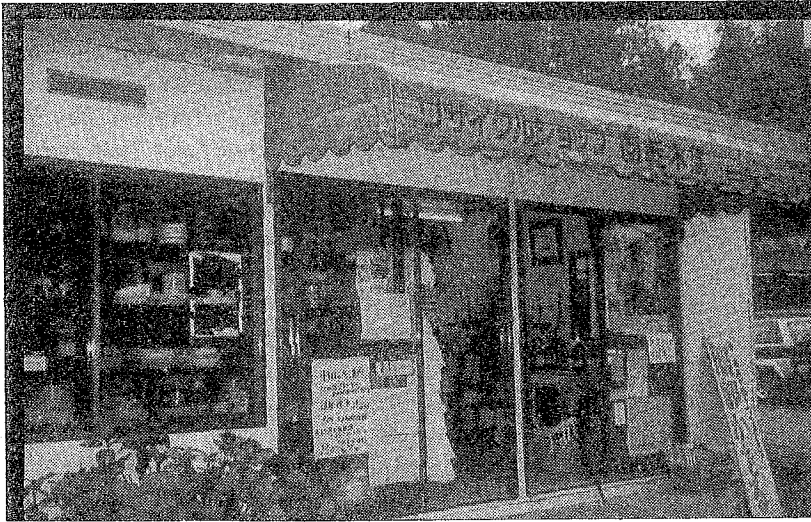
(successfully) ran its own candidates in local election campaigns in 1991. The direct partnerships with farmers developed by Green Coop and its predecessors have reached an economically significant dimension — the direct purchase of agricultural products from producers excluding rice amounting to 10 percent of its total goods turnover, and more than 20 percent (¥10 billion) including rice.

### The "Seikatsusha" Movement

Compared with the Green Coop, the Kanto-based Seikatsu Club seems more sophisticated intellectually. Its early-day publications are studied by Gramscian concepts such as hegemony and organic intellectuals. Now such words seem to have been discarded, but looking through *Shakai Undo* (Social Movements), the theoretical monthly journal published by Seikatsu Club's Social Movement Institute, one encounters a wide array of theories, ideas, and information — Mondragon, regulation theory, living economy, Asian feminism, Black-American feminism, Ralph Nader, and Chernobyl. Seikatsu Club in fact has attracted a number of liberal-left intellectuals and academics who, disillusioned by the traditional left movement, offer alternative theories. Not being a monolithic ideological entity, Seikatsu Club does not have, and is not supposed to have, a single theory to justify its activities. Yet, compared with other alternative livelihood groups, it seems to be far more argumentative and prone to conceptual generalization of what it does. What is the core of the Seikatsu Club thinking?

It is not easy to answer this question because there are widely divergent views and tendencies within the Club itself. But certainly the key concept is *seikatsusha*. Literally translated, *seikatsusha* is simply a "living person." ("Seikatsu" meaning living or everyday life and "sha" a person). But of course it implies more than that.

*Seikatsu* in fact has been understood differently depending on the social contexts in which it has been used. In the period of rampant economism in the 60s, *seikatsu* meant mostly economic life, which would be improved with higher wages and larger incomes. In the socio-ecological context emergent since the 1970s, *seikatsu* has become a value-loaded concept meaning living in full enhancement of the quality of life. One can live one's life in an unworthy manner. A company employee who devotes himself to the company cause and forgets about his



This shop also serves as a candidate's election office.

family makes his *seikatsu* instrumental to the company interests and so does not live his own *seikatsu* properly. Similarly, one who eats junk food all day is not a proper *seikatsusha*.

Certainly this *seikatsu* concept was the antithesis to the prevalent mode of human existence shaped under corporate dominance, in which lifestyle, tastes, choice of food, and all aspects of *seikatsu* were subjected to media-imposed standards. Seikatsu Club asserts the independence of *seikatsusha* from this dominance, and declares that it pursues the "sovereignty of *seikatsusha*." Seikatsu Club being a consumer cooperative, the loss of *seikatsusha* sovereignty over consumption mattered most seriously. "In the post-industrial society," a policy paper of Seikatsu Club Kanagawa explained, "many people began to search for an alternative life through critical reflections on wasteful life."

### Toward *Seikatsusha* Politics

From the notion of *seikatsusha* came Seikatsu Club's political involvement. Seikatsu Club as a social movement has aimed to create politics of its own out of *seikatsu* or "politicize problems of living (*seikatsu*)," Nakamura Yoichi, a Seikatsu Club theorist, explained. (*Shakai Undo*, No. 132, Mar. 15, 1991, p.57)

For Seikatsu Club, this type of politics began through its "soapist" movement in 1980. Calling for a decree banning chemical detergents, signatures were collected and petitions were presented, but the local administration cold-shouldered the

women's petitions. The members perceived that the only way to bring *seikatsu* right into the arena of local politics was to send their own representatives to the local legislature.

The early 1980s were indeed a quantum leap period for Seikatsu Club. Seikatsu Club Kanagawa, in its 1983 policy document, recalled that through the campaign against chemical detergents, and "through the collective purchase movement, the Seikatsu Club movement began to search for a new way — toward the whole of life."

(*Seikatsu Club Undo no Genzai — Seikatsu Club wa ima doko ni iruka*)

Seikatsu Club Kanagawa presented a pyramid model to describe the mutual relationship of the major activity areas. The pyramid has four corners, three of them forming its base, namely the collective purchase, workers' collective, and the "depots" (later explained), and the fourth and pinnacle is political representation in local assemblies. Seikatsu Club thus advances the slogan, "From collective purchase to the whole life *seikatsu*."

### Workers' Collectives

Having declared this "whole life" slogan, Seikatsu Club began to attach strategic importance to workers' collectives. Furusawa Yuko, an activist-researcher closely working with the ecological movement, argued that since working housewives (part-timers) have come to outnumber "full-time housewives," the collective purchase of goods alone has gradually become insufficient as the main activity form of the alternative livelihood cooperative. While collective purchases of foods presupposed housewives who would cook at home, housewives were no longer at home all day, the majority holding part-time jobs at neighboring supermarkets, service industries, and manufacturing firms. Such working housewives preferred to buy ready-made foods rather than to cook at home. With this, catering services began to flourish, offering cooked meals for families. More and more old men and women were left unattended at home. This led to a commodification and externalization of activities traditionally conducted at home.

Seikatsu Club responded to this situation by creating workers' production collectives. If the club members worked outside anyway, why should they work for commercial enterprises? Why not organize their own units of production and services to meet the needs of the community?

The workers' collectives thus emerged as a necessary evolutionary form in which Seikatsu Club extended its activities from consumption to production.

There are now about 100 such workers' collectives of Seikatsu Club origin, in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, Saitama, and Hokkaido, where approximately 2,000 women work. Their businesses range widely from catering and recycling shops to acupuncture clinics, bakeries, services for the aged, and translation services. One of the earliest workers' collectives set up in 1982 with the help of the Seikatsu Club Kanagawa, called Ninjin, sorts Club-supplied goods into family parcels. Started by 79 women, Ninjin grew rapidly to have hundreds of members.

"Depots" created early in the 1980s are another strategic element. The depots are a kind of community center and shop managed autonomously as independent worker collectives by Seikatsu Club members. While the Club's principle is not to have shops but to deliver goods through *han* (groups of 6-13 families) on advance orders, depots were also felt necessary because working women, away from home when goods were delivered, found it difficult to receive ordered goods on a day-to-day basis. The depots also serve as community centers for various activities including cultural activities. The first depot was established in 1982 and there are now 15 all over Kanagawa Prefecture with 15,000 registered members.

### Electoral Politics

As was said earlier, participation in electoral politics is the apex of the Seikatsu Club's pyramid model. With the "whole life" approach, it fully entered into local electoral politics. In participating in local elections, it created a political arm, often called the Seikatsu NET, which is organically integrated with, but formally independent of, the Seikatsu Club Coop.

A sympathetic critic said that the "best and brightest" of the club members were recruited for NET activities, leaving the coop side hollow. Right or not, the NET assembly women are all powerful,

attractive, and energetic personalities, most in their forties.

The elected NET candidates are not called *giin* (representatives) but *dairinin* (agents). The idea is that the elected people are only instruments of the community. The *seikatsusha* politics is considered to exist in the mid of community and cannot be alienated from it. The idea of professional politicians is thus rejected, and no NET *dairinin* may be elected for more than two terms. Nakamura Yoichi explained, "This movement does not seek to increase assembly representatives as a goal in itself. They are simply agents of the community. They are a medium whereby citizens' autonomy can be promoted through solving a range of community problems."

According to Nakamura, the politicization of *seikatsu* has four aspects: 1) moving from everyday life (*seikatsu*) into elected assembly; 2) politicizing everyday life and everyday life-izing (*seikatsu-izing*) politics; 3) creating alternative systems in the locality; and 4) questioning (and transforming) existing everyday life relations.

The group's first success was in 1979, followed by a major electoral victory in 1987 with 31 Seikatsu Club candidates returned in the Greater Tokyo area. In this area, the group has had a total of 65 representatives at the prefectural, municipal and township levels. They are all women. Political commentators have been impressed, recognizing Seikatsu Club as a dark horse in local politics.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

There is no doubt that the alternative livelihood coop movement is a dynamic, expanding, and well-organized social movement that has ambitiously walked into the arena of alternative systems from its original turf of the consumer movement. One of its strong points certainly is that involves *seikatsu*, the everyday life of ordinary people — what they eat, drink, and use every day. This opened the movement to any citizen who wished at least to eat safe food, and thus ensured the participation of hundreds of thousands of people who would have shunned any overtly political commitment. Vaguely sensed aversions to the culture of waste, excess consumption, media-machinated artificial greed, and, for that matter, a sense of powerlessness, on the part of multitudes of citizens, have been effectively tapped and channeled into a social movement with socio-ecological concerns. And this ap-

proach has established legitimacy in society.

It should be recalled that in the 1970s, thousands of young people, by visiting Sanrizuka and sharing farm work with fighting farmers, went through profound conversion experiences through discovering that for the farmers living was one with struggling. Living was also one with struggling in the earlier labor movement, when, as at the Miike colliery in the late 50s, the whole workers' community was involved in struggle. But gradually over time, struggle was alienated from living (*seikatsu*), politics from everyday life, thinking from eating, and opinion from lifestyle.

The alternative livelihood movement, and typically the new coop movement, set out to reverse this relationship by emphasizing the second series of items in these sets, offering *seikatsu*, eating, and lifestyle as starting points for action and mediating these to the first series — struggle, thinking, and opinion. Derived in the reverse way, the quality of struggle, politics, thinking, and opinions would naturally be altered from what they once were.

The alternative livelihood coops have in fact created alternative relations with farmers. But this should not be idealized. Being consumer coops, they have done so basically in the interest of consumers they represent. In most cases, individual farmers, organic farmers' groups, and agricultural associations are in a weaker position and must meet conditions presented by the coops. To the farmers, the coops are excellent customers to whose inclinations they must always be sensitive. While the coops are large organizations with great purchasing power, the farmers are individuals or individual groups without their own organizations. It is true that coop-farmer relations are qualitatively different from the relations of patronage and dependence existing between big business interests and farmers. Coop-contract farmer relations are more human, and the shared philosophy is ecological. But even in this relationship, subtle subjugation of contract farmers

by the large coops is suspected.

Ohno Kazuoki, an agricultural journalist who has worked closely with the farmers' movement for decades, is calling for reversing the unilaterally urban-led relationship between coops and organic farmers in favor of a rural-led pattern. "Using extreme words, what exists is a divide-and-rule relationship. Urban consumers are united in huge organizations but farmers are not," he said. He warned that if the urban consumers' organizations are too big, they may even cause harm. According to Ohno:

"Big coops need products in big lots. They need organically grown vegetables in large quantities, and so, go about securing large supply capacities. Then it is often official agricultural cooperatives (Nokyo) that come up with offers, and individual farmers who have been laboring to supply purely organic products for coops are gradually excluded as they cannot supply sufficiently large quantities. Organic agriculture by nature cannot be done on a very large scale, and so what Nokyo delivers in large lots are not real organic vegetables. But that is one of the negative consequences of building big."

If Ohno is correct, the general subjugation of the rural by the urban is reproduced in a new way. Though still at the beginning, however, on the initiative of relatively powerful groups, organic farmers are starting to organize nationally to bargain for favorable terms with urban coops on an equal footing, according to Ohno.

Kanno Yoshihide, a radical farmer leader in Okitama basin in Yamagata Prefecture, remarked that so far farmers were meekly watching big cities' inclinations and following them. His Okitama Farmers' Exchange is an extremely dynamic farmers' regional network with ties to the Tama Consumers' Coop in suburban Tokyo, and is engaged in both national farmer organizing and international solidarity activities.

"The general line," he said, "has always been

*Vaguely sensed aversions to the culture of waste, excess consumption, media-machinated artificial greed, and a sense of powerlessness, on the part of multitudes of citizens, have been effectively tapped and channeled into a social movement with socio-ecological concerns.*

made in big cities, and we farmers had to follow it. Now we want to reverse the relationship. We in each agricultural area will make the general line and organize solidarity networks among autonomous rural areas so we can break our dependence on metropolises."

Despite their organic ties with organic farmers, the urban coops tend to view agriculture and farmers as external to their envisaged system. In other words, their notion of "whole life" must be relativized if they really want to go beyond their urban middle-class consumer limits. Otherwise, their good ambition to grow into an alternative socio-economic system may end in complacency.

The danger of not recognizing the externality of others and the tendency to stunt the stature of the external world to fit its own stature is shown in Kanagawa NET's (the Seikatsu Club's political wing) recent draft policy document. (*Jidai no kawarimeni, ima, Kanagawa net, Kanagawa Network Undo*). Proposing a new policy required "at the turn of world history," it called for a "universality that passes throughout the world." "The universal concepts" whereby Kanagawa NET defines itself, however, are "consumers, *seikatsusha*, and citizens," which, according to the statement, are to replace the notions of workers and farmers. On that basis, it proclaimed:

"...our policy goal in the 1990s is (to ensure) that Japan will grow from a mere 'economic great power' into a '*seikatsu* great power,' and externally, contribute to the making of a new international order... In the midst of the globalization of economy, Japan should play a major role in the search for new forms of global economic integration, a role commensurate with its power, with regard to overseas economic assistance and in other areas."

Though this is not necessarily Seikatsu Club consensus, this position is alarmingly status quo-oriented. Japan's "economic great power" status is positively accepted, and it is assumed that *seikatsu* will prosper on that basis. The language of this statement in fact closely resembles the official language of the bureaucracy and the LDP government. Prime Minister Miyazawa, in his first policy speech to the Diet in January 1992, used the identical phrase: from an economic great power to a *seikatsu* great power.

Acceptance of Japan as an "economic great power" is obviously self-defeating to the "alternative livelihood" movement. Growth measured by

GNP, corporate supremacy, the dominance of production over consumption, and wasteful lifestyles make up Japan's economic great power status. And these have precisely been the objects of fundamental criticism by the alternative livelihood movement. Accepting Japan's status quo as a "economic great power" thus will lead to the renunciation of this fundamental critique for partial modification of surplus distribution in favor of *seikatsu* aspects. This would be a suicidal act for a movement pledged to build an alternative society. More importantly, the Kanagawa NET statement is oblivious to the fact that Japan's economic great power status is largely maintained by domination and exploitation of other economies and people, notably of other Asian and other developing countries, in the general context of the perpetuated unequal world structure.

If the alternative livelihood movement bypasses these fundamental questions and takes the economic great power status as the basis for the buildup of *seikatsu* power, the "system" the movement is pledged to build can hardly be an alternative system. At best it will amount to a subsystem limited to the urban middle class environment. Externally, such a movement will result in the defense of the global status quo at the cost of the majority of the people of the world.

Generally speaking, however, this danger seems to be still latent in or limited to some segments of the alternative livelihood movement. There is certainly a growing awareness among movement activists that relativizing themselves in interaction with other segments of people and people's movements, particularly those in the Third World, is necessary.

To sum up, the alternative livelihood movement, and particularly its coop wing, undoubtedly opened up new horizons in the people's movement scene of the 1980s. Particularly remarkable is the fact that it has flung open the door of the movement to ordinary people, housewives in the main, who would have been repelled by conventional political language of the left, and released their vast energies. More importantly, this movement has introduced a new dimension into the Japanese movement culture — a shift from oppositionist positions to creator positions. Because of its signal success so far, however, the alternative livelihood coop movement is burdened with a dual task — building big and staying radical. ■

# Bananas to Change the World



## Interview with Hotta Masahiko

*This is the second interview AMPO has done with Hotta Masahiko. In the first, published in 1989 (Vol.20 No.4-Vol.21 No.1), we talked about the development of the "Alter" Trade movement and its activities trading mascobado sugar and bananas from the island of Negros in the Philippines to Japan. In this interview we concentrated rather on the future, on Hotta's plans for creating an alternative economic system, and the place of alternative trade in this system.*

*Hotta Masahiko is the president of Alter-Trade Japan (ATJ).*

**Hotta:** We started with emergency-oriented aid to people. But we found that aid by itself couldn't aid anything. It was just temporary food. Then the people of Negros told us that it would be better to carry out certain financial assistance schemes for the people to make their own small-scale development activities. To allow them to produce their own daily food. Then we started to provide financial assistance for their own self-rehabilitation.

The next stage, then, was how to build up a people's economic system. The people there had no apparent resources: no cash, no capital, no offices for their own marketing. So to set up this function, we got the idea to create an international trading system, and to use the economic gap between the North and the South to give a premium price to the producers so they can make some cash to start the projects.

Perhaps our characteristic as an alternative started when we began thinking of the market in Japan itself. In our alternative trade, we don't consider the commodity to be most important, but rather the solidarity between people. Through this alternative trading, we build support for people in Negros, but the commodities from the South should also change the attitude of the Japanese consumers and our society. The commodity can become a medium sent from the South to the North to conscientize consumers and make them reflect on their consumerism in the so-called "affluent society."

So ATJ has a dual purpose. One is support for the South, and the other is transformation of the

North. These two objectives should always be together. That is our first concept of alternative trading.

**AMPO:** I think an important point is that of the method of transformation. There seems to be a tendency to promote structural change in the South, and to limit change in the North to "a change of consciousness." How do you propose to overcome this?

**Hotta:** I think this is one of the most difficult and radical questions about what constitutes an alternative. Trading as a nature is a facilitator between A and B. At this moment in Japan, we are simply trying to motivate a group of consumers, through the South as a meter for the North, to see its own postures and faces. I think it is a conscientizing process. But it is quite radical. Instead of just giving information, we are always accompanied by the banana as medium. Those who eat the bananas, whether they like it or not, become very conscious of where the banana came from. It creates a rapport between the producers and the consumers. We always distribute the bananas along with information about how they were picked, who the producers were, where the profits will go.

The basic idea is, let the Japanese consumers carry out their social transformation based on their own organization and orientation. We will simply stimulate them through this commodity. But even more, we need to support the people of the South for survival. This is not a matter of social transfor-

mation in the South, but a matter of survival. First of all, they need to survive. Then they can transform society. We cannot simply intervene in the South for social transformation. It is easy for people in the North to talk about transformation, but it isn't easy for those in the South.

**AMPO:** Now I'd like to ask you about the potential of your movement. Is the space that is being opened a space within capitalism, or is it a counter-capitalist movement? In other words, what alternative economic program does this fit into?

**Hotta:** When we started the banana trade, the most important elements were: that trading should be economically effective for peoples' survival, ecologically sound, and that it should work towards people's development. These three elements were experienced during more than two and a half years of actual operations. In the beginning, we could only import 10 tons a month, but now we are importing 60-100 tons. This has been quite a development in just two and a half years. Moreover, the number of people involved in Negros per shipment, which means 15-30 tons, is 500-700 persons, going from the producers to the haulers who bring down the bananas to the truck drivers and the packers.

Through this process, the people in Negros have been able to organize themselves as the Banana Growers Association, which is a kind of producer's cooperative. Almost all the operations have been carried out under their own initiative. So through this very real and weekly activity, they have been able to develop organizationally and personally, and have been able to really enjoy their work. It isn't work which was ordered or given by some kind of capitalist or any kind of traditional feudal master. It's their own activity, and the result is real, direct benefit to them, because the price of



*Loading bananas – Photo courtesy of ATJ*

the bananas is much higher than those sold to the traditional middlemen.

When we started as aid, neither we nor the people in the South were concerned about quality, because it was solidarity. People would buy it anyway. But that created a sort of dependency.

We had a very hard time, which lasted for more than three years, working on improving the quality, and the consumers have always been involved in this process. Actually, bananas are extremely perishable, and under Japanese regulations, bananas have to still be green when they arrive at the Japanese port. This is why we have a 36-hour limit, and it is also why we reject bigger bananas because they are already over-matured. We have to cut the smaller ones as well, because they are malnourished, and you can't taste any-



*Hauling bananas down from the mountains – Photo courtesy of ATJ*

thing. It's just pulp. It's very sad for the consumers if they pay the higher price and then just get pulp.

So it has been a mutual learning process. This tension between producers and consumers, if it occurs democratically and healthily, is a quite important element in the relation.

In these ways, we have found that this trade is directly empowering people in Negros, and this empowerment means that they have the potential to become a very democratic society. Also, they are developing their own agricultural technologies as they become very quality-conscious. That is the real point where a mere agricultural worker turns into a farmer or a peasant. They were once sugarcane workers, and their farming was mere supplemental work for their daily food. It reflected a kind of monocrop culture of the sugarcane. As you know, sugarcane is just planted, and then left alone until time for harvest. So this isn't agriculture, this isn't farming.

For more than a hundred years, that was the only agriculture they knew. But through the banana trading, they are developing a peasant spirit. In this sense, we have experienced empowering people through a very real activity, namely economy. They have been able to get economic benefits. Apparently the economic status of the people there has improved a lot compared to be-

fore. So that's one potential of alternative trading.

**AMPO:** I would like to now ask about the relationship between the farmers in the South and those in the North. You promote visits by Japanese farmers to Negros, so what does this mean?

**Hotta:** Well, actually, if you think of the situation of agriculture, there are no borders between farmers or peasants. Agriculture has been totally devastated by the existing world system. Essentially, the farmers should be united. They face similar problems and attacks, and they are equally victimized by the existing systems.

I think farmers should have their own transborder network, and should support each other in terms of technology, know-how, and even with labor. This has to do with how peasants can be self-sustainable against industrial society. The peasants have been given the enormous task of feeding whole nations with the products, but they have been totally neglected. Their rights have been neglected. So perhaps the revolution of the 21st century may come from the farmers. Perhaps it will be a blockade of the cities by the farmers.

**AMPO:** In this case, you shouldn't import what it's possible to produce in Japan.



## Alternative Economy

**Hotta:** Yes, it is better to avoid this. If our activity can't empower the farmers on both sides, it is not correct. The commodities we import must also be stimuli to Japanese farmers as well.

For the farmers, the most important thing is how to market their commodities. Actually, they have been victimized because they had no marketing power. At ATJ, we would like to be an alternative marketing system for the producers at the same time that we work for the consumers. Without creating such alternative marketing, farmers may not be able to survive. They might be able to do a blockade, but they still need cash. They also need to be involved in the economic system. So there should be a people-based alternative marketing system.

On the very difficult question about an entire alternative economy, I think the following three elements are important: people-oriented, empowering of people, and promoting democracy. Also, through these activities the people themselves should be able to develop knowledge and know-how that will be useful for their own lives. I think an economy based on these targets or principles can be an alternative economy, at least by my definition. If any economic activity, regardless of the style, aims at these important targets, it is an alternative. But it is very difficult to set up this kind of system.

**AMPO:** I'd like to ask you about another source of potential. I was in Negros Island last August, and this thought occurred to me at the time. In as far as changing the North is concerned, they are carrying out the farm lot programs among the sugar workers (See interview with Serge Cherniguin, p. 29) as well as alternative trading, which tends to move people away from sugarcane and into other kinds of agriculture.

In some ways, the multinational corporations have an image of how they want the world to be, which is that each region produces a single crop, based perhaps on "green revolution" technology, and that the multinationals themselves are able to control this process.

But movements like alternative trading go against this vision. The growers themselves should decide what they will grow, and it should be based on their own local conditions. As long as people do this, the North will be forced to change, for it won't

be able to rely any longer on having a cheap supply of single crops.

**Hotta:** Yes. Perhaps I can share some visions we have as ATJ. This is still a dream, but a very possible dream. We are setting up a Five-Year Development Plan for banana marketing in Japan. At this moment, total imports of bananas into Japan amount to about 670,000 tons per year. Out of this, people's bananas from Negros only make up 1,200 tons a year, or about 0.17 percent of the share. We would like to build this up to at least one percent within five years. Negros alone cannot provide such a quantity. We need to develop operations throughout the Philippines, and to identify people's organizations or people who want to be banana exporters.

Apparently, Japanese consumers have come to prefer chemical-free natural bananas to the more beautiful-looking ones that are heavily laden with chemicals. In this case, we may develop over the Philippines, and if we are talking about one percent of the Japanese market it will be six or seven times more than our present imports. It means six or seven more people's organizations and areas in the Philippines. By that time, perhaps, there will be some very clear contrast between the multinational bananas and people's bananas. We will promote our bananas, and will try to motivate as many people as possible to buy people's bananas. For the first time, citizen's movements in Japan will be able to really, economically try to fight against the multinationals; not idealistically or logically or rationally, but economically.

Of course, the multinationals are big, but on the other side, we have very solid consumers who are determined to buy our products. In that sense, our economic scale is already considerable. We already have one million potential consumers, but only two-three percent of these consumers are buying our bananas. It isn't inconceivable eventually for us to draw two or three million consumers into this "banana war."

In that context, I have an image of what an alternative economy can be. One area in the North will support or have an economic relationship with a specific area in the South. One community in Japan will support one community in the Philippines through banana trading, or for other commodities we will find other communities. So there will be closed economic relations between the ar-

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reas, and this will help to support the targets I mentioned above.

If we can develop several more areas in Japan, and several more areas in the South, this will become a closed, determined economic bloc.

**AMPO:** If you close off the system in that way, though, it may become impossible for you to keep getting bananas at a cheap price. It's only because that overall world system exists that it's possible to go in now and make alternative trade. If the system is cut off, there won't be any reason for the people in Negros to produce cheap bananas.

**Hotta:** That's a dilemma we may have when we reach the final goal: what can Japanese consumers sell to the South?

**AMPO:** That's right. Are the people in Negros going to be willing to keep producing bananas for the North if they don't need to?

**Hotta:** At this moment, the consumers in Japan are mere consumers. They are earning their money through the very traditional world economic system, producing Japanese cars...

**AMPO:** Or through interest on Third World debt.

**Hotta:** So the question is, what can the consumers do in the final stage? That will be a very interesting agenda for the Japanese consumers as we head towards the 21st century. Perhaps, this is just theoretical, but if we can close the relationship to just the two areas, we will not need to pay cash. Perhaps the bananas will be sent from the area in the South to that in the North, and the area in the North will provide some kind of credit in exchange, which needn't be money. Those with the credit will be able to buy something from the North. So if the area in Japan is producing some commodity that is useful to the South, they will be able to give it in exchange. If not, perhaps some volunteers will go South and help cultivate the land or build houses. They will pay the debt through their labor.

Everything will become a barter system. But this is quite theoretical.

**AMPO:** I don't think the World Bank and the IMF will be happy at this proposal. But let me go back to another problem I see with alternative trading.

When I was in Negros, at the banana packing station, one thing that surprised me was that they were bringing the bananas down to load them onto the trucks, but they were discarding some of the bananas because they were too small. They were less than six inches long. And what occurred to me is that there is still a power relationship between the consumers and the producers. In an ideal situation, the relationship should be equal.

You also mentioned the question of solidarity. I think it's true that many consumers in the North are involved in the process because they feel solidarity with the people in the South. But I wonder if the people in the South are involved for the same reason? This also has to do with the relationship between consumer and producer.

So the question is, how can you create a situation where this power relationship ceases to exist?

**Hotta:** It isn't easy to make a sketch of an ideal relationship. At this moment, apparently the Japanese consumers have money, and money becomes power. But at the same time, speaking for the Japanese consumers, they are working hard to earn money, and they are paying for the bananas, a price 2.7 times higher than that for ordinary bananas. But they are determined to buy these more expensive bananas. Therefore they want to preserve the right to demand a better quality which is worth that price. This is one insight of the consumers. They demand that it be in better condition.

Since the consumers are merely providing money at the moment, it is quite difficult to escape from the power structure. But in the long run, once the people in Negros can use the banana trading to develop their self-sufficient and self-reliant agriculture, they will no longer need to produce bananas.

They will be the decision-makers of whether they will ship the bananas or not. The Japanese side may ask for bananas, but the producers might say that "We are busy right now with other activities. Please stop buying our bananas." That is what we are talking about when we speak of agricultural development. How can we help the individual farmer to become self-sustaining, so that the farmers don't need to depend too much on the marketing systems or international markets. By that time, the power between consumers and producers will be totally equal. And Japan will starve. Those who have no solidarity links will starve. ■

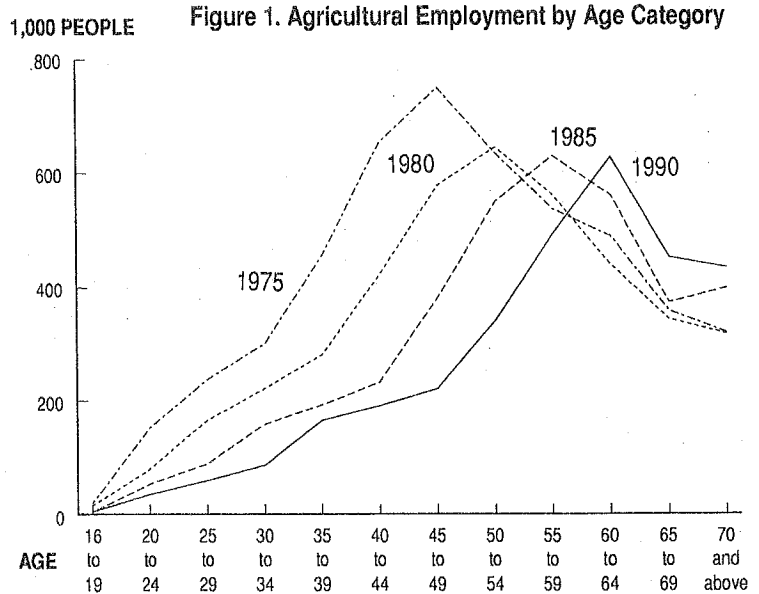
# The Davids and Goliaths of Asian Agriculture

By Ohno Kazuoki

In the following article Ohno Kazuoki, an agricultural journalist and coordinator for the Asian Peasant Exchange Committee, a group working to create solidarity between farmers in the Asian region, describes the multifaceted agricultural crises in Japan, Negros, Taiwan, and Thailand.

The deepening crises farmers in these different countries face are tied to each other and to the mono-agriculture farms of the large multinational agribusiness firms. Japanese industrial expansion during the last decade spearheaded the transformation of an unfair division of labor in East Asia. The most profitable production activities in East Asia, based in Japan, depend upon imports of goods, such as food, made by those forced into less profitable activities in Third World countries. Under the recent political and economic pressure from the North to end protection of domestic industries in order to qualify for aid, people in underdeveloped countries have been further cornered into less profitable export oriented industries and into dependence on the North for industrial goods. It is this larger unequal division of labor that forms the context of the farmers' crises and struggles and the growing wealth disparity between overdeveloped Japan and underdeveloped countries in Asia.

Our discussion of the Negros peasants' struggle for self-reliance and community building actually begins with the present agricultural crises in Japan. Domestic food production has been sliding downward like an avalanche and has reached a stage of irretrievable dissolution. Currently, domestically produced food constitutes about only about 48 percent or less of total calories served at Japanese tables. People in their prime are



fleeing agriculture.

The decrease in the consumption of food produced in Japan is occurring simultaneously with a steady increase in the percentage of older workers employed in the agriculture industry. According to Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) statistics, in 1990 54 percent of "full-time agricultural workers" were men over sixty, while 42 percent were women in this same age bracket. Only 3.3 percent were men between 16 and 29 years of age, and just 1.6 percent women in the same age group. The ministry predicts that by the year 2000 68 percent of those employed in agriculture will be men over sixty, and 62 percent will be similarly aged women, while young men and women will make up just 1.8 and 0.7 respectively.

But these are fairly conservative predictions in light of recent trends. According to MAFF statistics, from 1985 to 1990 there was a 34 percent decrease in the number of full-time agricultural workers aged under 59. In contrast, this same decrease was just 21 percent between 1980-85, and 19 percent from 1975-80. This rapid aging of farm workers is

one of the most conspicuous developments in the Japanese agriculture industry.

In addition, the overall number of workers is declining, and this bleeding is directly related to the increasing amount of land being abandoned by farmers, which reached 220,000 hectares according to the ministry's 1990 report. When we add the area of land uncultivated for at least one year, the total jumps to 380,000 hectares, a figure equivalent to all rice paddy fields cultivated in the seven prefectures of Kyushu (mainland Japan's southern island) combined. In contrast, only 90,000 hectares were left uncultivated as recently as 1985. Thus, the amount of fallow land, like the percentage of farmers in their prime leaving agriculture, has more than doubled between 1985-90.

### Everything in Short Supply

The recent price hikes in agricultural goods are a direct outcome of the changes described above. The price of such common vegetables as *daikon* (Japanese radishes), cabbage (*kyabetsu*), Chinese cabbage (*hakusai*), and carrots have risen and show no sign of decrease. From 1985 to 1990 the area of land used to cultivate *daikons* decreased by 10 percent and the price on the Tokyo Wholesale Market jumped 30 percent, from ¥77 (\$ .92) to ¥99 (\$1.20) per kilogram. During the same period the area planted with Chinese cabbages decreased 15 percent while the price rose 89 percent; for cabbages the statistics were a five percent land loss and a 24 percent price hike, for carrots a six percent loss and an incredible price rise of 94 percent, a near doubling. All these statistics are from 1985-1990, but since 1990 the situation has become even more drastic. According to a questionnaire conducted in February 1992 by the MAFF, 30 percent of vegetable farmers in Japan's central production areas said they would "stop producing, or reduce production of vegetables in the next several years." Only five percent answered that they would "expand" their production. Given the above correlations between abandoned land and prices, we may anticipate a deteriorating situation in coming years.

The collapse of domestic production is occurring not only in vegetables but in meats as well. The number of pig farms decreased by 43 percent between 1985-91, accompanied by a steady rise in the volume of imported pork. A tremendous number of dairy farmers are abandoning agriculture; in the major dairy farming districts, government figures

show that farmers have been leaving at a rate of over 10 percent a year. Perpetual shortages of important dairy products like butter and skimmed powdered milk have led to a rising demand for imports.

To cope with the shortages and price rises the government enacted an emergency import program. But instead of being a temporary measure this program has become a regular part of Japan's imports. Last year 430,000 tons of butter and skimmed-powdered milk were imported to cover expected milk shortages during the summer and Christmas season — due to increased milk use in the pastry industry. This was Japan's largest emergency import. Further, the emergency import program is actually in response to and part of a vicious cycle spawned by the liberalization of beef imports. Under liberalization, the price of domestic raw beef has drastically fallen and, as milk cows and their male calves are also sold as beef, their value has dropped, in turn causing milk prices to drop. Thus the liberalization of beef has also led to declining raw milk prices and dairy farm closings, in turn leading to increases in imports of dairy products. This cycle is bringing about an ongoing decline in Japan's dairy industry, and if this trend continues, the day will surely come when domestically produced milk is an ultra luxury.

The MAFF conducted the first nationwide investigation of dairy farmers' thoughts on the crisis and published its findings in March 1992 in a paper titled "All Japan Dairy Investigation." When asked "whether you intend to continue dairy farming," only 42 percent of all farmers outside of Hokkaido answered affirmatively, while only 56 percent of those in Hokkaido, Japan's main dairy-production area, answered in the affirmative. The remaining portion said they would "quit within five years" or that they "hadn't yet decided." I think it is only correct to consider the "undecided" group as people on the verge of leaving agriculture. Currently 60,000 dairy farms in Japan have survived the government's policy of restructuring the industry along the lines of Europe's mass production agriculture system. But now even these achievements are sputtering.

### Laid to Waste

The day will soon come when Japan will experience a rice shortage. The number of paddy fields in cultivation has been in decline for about 22 years, in

	1991		Increase in Imports from Previous Year (%) ▲=Decrease				
	Imports (billion yen)	Indexed Volume (1985 = 100)	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
All Agricultural Products	3,686.8	148.2	13.9	13.9	▲ 1.1	1.5	5.1
wheat	123.7	103.3	▲ 2.6	4.5	▲ 2.5	▲ 1.9	4.0
corn	215.3	117.6	15.2	▲ 0.5	▲ 5.4	4.2	2.1
sorghum	56.6	74.9	▲ 20.3	▲ 3.4	7.8	▲ 5.8	▲ 7.0
soybean	154.5	88.2	▲ 0.4	▲ 2.3	▲ 7.2	7.7	▲ 7.5
fruits	331.6	155.1	8.2	13.7	5.3	▲ 1.2	▲ 0.4
vegetables	235.8	165.4	14.5	24.4	0.7	▲ 4.2	10.2
meats	777.5	214.0	22.6	18.5	12.9	3.8	6.8
beef	245.4	236.7	21.7	19.1	30.6	6.7	▲ 4.0
pork	267.9	218.3	35.6	15.3	6.8	▲ 0.6	20.4
chicken	96.6	345.7	12.0	33.6	3.7	7.6	19.3
dairy products/eggs	115.8	144.3	4.2	24.0	▲ 12.4	▲ 6.0	30.5
raw sugar	61.4	95.7	▲ 3.4	7.1	▲ 4.9	▲ 5.2	8.5
coffee	93.9	136.2	12.7	1.2	5.0	4.1	2.9
Indexed Price of Imported Agricultural Products (Total)	—	69.3	▲ 14.2	0.0	18.9	2.6	▲ 8.1

Table 1. Trends in Imported Agricultural Products

part because there has always been an oversupply of domestically produced rice. But today we abruptly find ourselves facing a shortage. Two years ago I visited a farm village in Shikoku well-known for its producers' unions and its sophisticated cooperative farming system, but found that many of the unions had been forced into dysfunction by the aging of the farmers. The village-level union could barely fulfill its role of looking after the senior citizens' fields. Indeed, the leaders of the union were themselves over sixty and past their prime. The union had stopped raising funds for more rice-planting tractors, for they knew that there would be no one to use them. They acknowledged that when the present machines wore out the union would be dissolved. What would then become of the paddy fields? One of the men in charge of the union said, "From 30 to 40 percent of the 60 hectares of rice fields that our union cultivates, including those in neighboring villages, will be turned into wasteland."

Villages like this are scattered all over Japan. Domestic rice production has been (barely) supported mainly by elderly people, usually housewives and people holding second jobs, in mountainous areas. These mountainous paddy fields stored water, produced greenery, and played an important part in preventing downstream flash floods. Now all these functions are being lost with the decline of domestic rice production.

### Asia, Japan and Food Production

What is happening now in Japan is tied to the rapid drive to expand agricultural production in other Asian countries. Let us consider this process through an examination of pig husbandry because, as noted above, the number of farmers in this sector has rapidly declined in Japan.

### Pig Husbandry in Thailand...

Last autumn I received a letter from Kayotha Bamrung — Yo for short — who raises pigs in Karashin in northeastern Thailand. He and I have been friends since we first met at the International Peasants Exchange at the People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21) held in Japan during 1989. We have met several times since.

Raising pigs in northeastern Thailand became an important alternative livelihood for peasants who had to adapt to deforestation and great changes in the local ecological system, including salt pollution. Now pig-raising peasants in Thailand, like in Japan during the 1950s, are being encouraged to raise a variety of things besides pigs, including rice, vegetables, and chickens. In northeastern Thailand, they usually keep several sows and about ten male pigs for meat. These pigs are like bank accounts to be sold for cash in difficult times.

In his letter Yo explained that pig-raising peas-

ants are now in a great predicament. About ten years ago a joint US-Thai agribusiness enterprise called CP entered the industry, initially in chicken and feed production, meat processing, and marketing, then extending its operations to other industries to become one of the largest multinational enterprises in Thailand. CP has established large pig-raising plantations and now sells pigs at prices which have forced peasants to abandon their small scale pig husbandry farms. A similar process occurred when CP established large-scale chicken farms.

### ...and in Taiwan

Taiwan, one of the most successful of the NICs, is also known for its hog husbandry. In this small island of about 20 million people, there are 11 million pigs. The large number of hogs in the small area adds up to a pollution problem as the feces from the pigs alone equal that for about 70-80 million people. Taiwan's riverbanks are lined with hoggeries and pig feces are conveniently dumped into the rivers.

Feces are not all that is dumped into rivers. I had a chance to go up Changgun-river in the Tainan district which is said to be the worst polluted. We started from the mouth of the river and went up about 2 km by boat. Occasionally we saw bags floating in the water, some with dead pigs coming out. I was told that when pigs die of disease the farmers pack them into feed bags and throw them into the river. In other areas, the accumulated waste is so bad that methane gas rises out of drying riverbeds which have become huge lifeless ditches. Chén Hsiu-hsien, Secretary General of the Taiwan Farmers' Association, said one can think of Taiwan as an over-nitrogenized island.

With Taiwan's industrialization, agriculture production has declined like in Japan. But the hog-raising industry has been an exception. Taiwan's hog farms are sustained in part by cheap feed imported from the U.S. In fact, the largest feed-factory in Asia, run by the U.S. firm Cargil, the world's largest multinational agribusiness company, is in Taiwan. Backed by this huge feed factory which supplies them with cheap grain, the hoggeries are rarely cited for their mass pollution. But the pollution is causing various antagonisms. Fisheries at the mouth of the rivers have been seriously affected by contamination not only from the hoggeries, but from industrial factories as well.

Friction between fishermen and hog farmers has reached a critical point; soon there may be bloodshed. Meanwhile, as martial law was lifted in 1987 and democracy and political freedom has gradually grown, the ecology movement has expanded. Pressured by this movement, politicians in 1991 hammered out a policy to reduce hog farm exports by one third and focus output on domestic consumption. Hog numbers have reportedly already declined. As noted, in Japan pork imports are on the rise and domestic production is declining. In 1990 Japanese domestic pork production was 1,540,000 (undressed) tons while imports amounted to 490,000, or equal to about 32 percent of domestic production. Taiwan is Japan's largest pork supplier, exporting about half of all its exports to Japan. Denmark is number two at about 30 percent and the U.S. third at about 10 percent.

Considering the development of the pork industry in Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand together, we may see that the motion of the pork industry in these countries is but a single process and that their mutual formation remains hidden as long as we examine them separately. In Thailand multinational agribusiness plantations are putting smaller farmers out of business. Taiwanese pig farmers, who supply the largest share of Japanese pork imports and contribute to declining Japanese production, are reducing their production under government direction due to severe ecological problems. In Japan production is declining and consumers are increasingly eating imports.

These facts are all connected. I suspect Japanese trading companies are investment partners in the Thai-CP pork industry. The integrated hierarchy of pork production puts Japanese stomachs at the top, and this is true not only for pork, but also for vegetables and, soon, for rice.

### Negros and Japan

When I visited the Philippine Island of Negros, I felt it should be included as part of the above situation. In a seminar on agriculture at the Tuburan farm, Serge Cherniguin, vice chairman of the National Federation of Sugar Workers, told us that now the World Bank is urging land reform in the Philippines, especially in Negros. The reform aims to promote the conversion of rice paddies to the production of vegetables for export, while U.S. and Canadian wheat will be imported in greater quantities. This policy will have dire consequences in the Philippines.

It is no surprise that with its long history of colonial domination Philippine agriculture is characterized by a polarized system of large-plantations and poor peasant-farmers, including Negros' sugarcane industry, Mindanao's banana industry, and so on. As far as I could see, in Negros there were no landed or independent farmers. I was shocked at seeing the plains dominated by plantations, with scarcely any crops for Negros people to eat. Large quantities of fertilizers are used on exhausted land and despite a water shortage faced by the local resident, crops are lavishly provided water from sprinklers.

Cherneguín explained that the proposed World Bank reforms will leave this sugarcane system of production untouched and will focus on land reform in the rice production sector. But what are the consequences when a country like the Philippines, mired in debt, specializes in vegetable exports and imports wheat and other food for domestic consumption? Money earned from exports is allotted to debt repayment, not to import foods. Indeed, the conversion of rice to vegetables is premised in part on the Philippines' so-called self-sufficiency in domestic rice production. But when I asked about these statistics, Cherneguín quickly pointed out that, "In the Philippines, most people do not even have enough to eat. Self-sufficiency in this situation means nothing." The priority of the village self-reliance program is to provide people with "three adequate and well-balanced meals a day."

Kanda Hiroshi, a member of the Research and Study Group on Official Development Assistance, an independent organization, recently explained to me that Sudan is suffering today from similar World Bank recommendations made during the 1970s. In order to secure development loans the Sudanese government was told to import more U.S. wheat and switch domestic wheat production to cotton. This policy was followed and most wheat fields were converted. But in the 1980s the international price of cotton plummeted, the Sudanese had insufficient money to buy wheat, and serious starvation has plagued the people since.

To where will the vegetables produced in Negros be exported? Not the U.S. or Canada; it's too far, and increasingly these countries import vegetables from Mexico, a trend that will surely continue with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement. There is no other

country but Japan that is close enough, needs, and can afford to import the vegetables.

The story, in short, is that Japanese industrialization has eliminated farmers' livelihoods in Japan and, with the help of the World Bank, is integrating Negros as part of a regional hierarchy of production and wealth with Japan at the top. This amounts to an economic invasion that will probably result in the spread of hunger in the Philippines and the growing gap of wealth between overdeveloped and underdeveloped countries.

In addition, the ongoing Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks is increasingly focusing on this kind of structure as it calls for Japan to open its rice markets. Once opened, what remains of Japanese rice farmers' livelihoods will be destroyed.

Furthermore, the current GATT round calling for free trade in agriculture will exacerbate the grim conditions of sugar production in Negros and have disastrous consequences for sugar producers in the U.S. Presently, Negros exports the maximum amount of sugar allowed under the Weber Clause which protects U.S. sugar and dairy production and which allots limited sugar imports from Caribbean countries and the Philippines.

In 1989 a group of Japanese workers, farmers, and citizens invited a young farmer-activist from Idaho, U.S., as part of an effort to organize the struggle against free-trade agriculture. He mentioned that sugar beets are the second largest agriculture product in Idaho and pointed out that abolishing the Weber Clause would injure not only Idaho farmers, but those in Caribbean countries and the Philippines, as cheaper sugar from Brazil is exported to the U.S. In turn, the expansion of the Brazilian sugar industry would spur the already rapid destruction of Amazon rainforest.

We can thus see that U.S. multinationals are the masters of the fate of sugar production and conditions in Negros. Yet when the agricultural free trade agreements are realized at the GATT Uruguay Round, it is the Japanese government that will appear as the leader and will open its markets for crops other than sugar. It is clear what we should do. The Japanese struggle for revitalization of agriculture and the struggle in Negros for self-sufficiency have a common enemy — multinational agribusinesses, the governments that support them and so-called free trade. We stand on the same ground. ■



# Fighting 'Managed Poverty'

By Douglas Lummis

*Negros Island is in many ways a production field for the world system and for Japan in particular. AMPO editorial board member Douglas Lummis travelled there in August 1992, and his observations helped in our search for alternatives.*

Anyway, one of our informants told us, LIC (Low Intensity Conflict) works. It works better than the boasting and bullying of the Marcos regime. Not that there is that much difference. The army continues to uproot, brutalize and torture the people. You still hear stories of groups of bolo-wielding right-wing religious fanatics chopping off people's heads while the police look the other way. But there was something about the proper, decent, housewifely image of the Corazon Aquino government that made the violence difficult to see. It's hard to get it into your head that someone with as comfortable a nickname as "Cory" waged total war (her words) against a big part of her people.

In the Philippine province of Negros Occidental, where I visited this August with a group sponsored by the Japan Committee for Negros Campaign (JCNC) and Alter-Trade Japan (ATJ), the shadow of the war was visible everywhere. In the communities of internal refugees, driven from their homes by the military. In the big sections of the map where you can't go in. In the military checkpoints everywhere. In the statistics showing thousands of hectares taken away from poor farmers and returned to big landowners. In the sad, exhausted, determined faces of the people.

In personal shocks. When I first visited Negros

in April, 1986, one of the high points of the trip was a day at a village in the northern foothills where the people had only just gotten control of 67 hectares of farmland, which they were turning into a model cooperative community. They showed us their first crops of rice, corns and beans, their new irrigation ditches, their fishpond, and with fierce pride described their stubborn resistance to the private army of the big landlord next door, who was trying to drive them out (AMPO Vol.18, no.1, 1986). When I asked this time how they were doing, I was told

that they had been beaten. Not only are they back to working for wages in the landowner's fields, but the men have been forced to join the hated Civilian Armed Forces Geographical Unit (CAFGU). In Negros, choking down defeats like this is a part of daily life.

There are defeats, but the people of Negros are not defeated. We visitors from the rich countries of the North are apt to wonder, under circumstances like

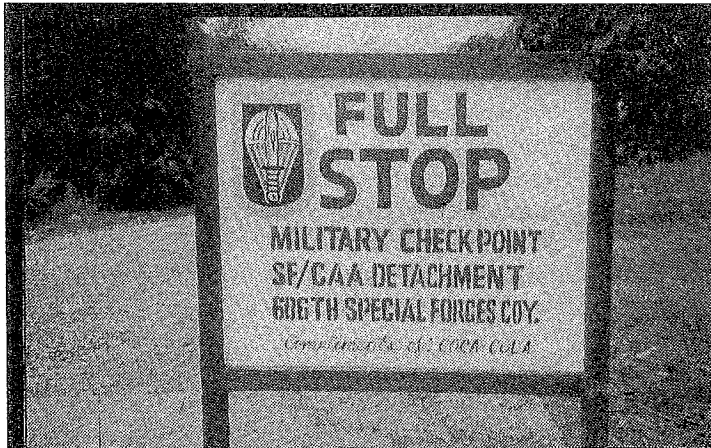
these, what keeps them going? But the question itself is a luxury. In the North a movement activist who suffers a few defeats — even vicarious ones in another country like the Soviet Union or China — has the option of abandoning the movement and returning to mainstream life. But if you are a sugar worker or a sharecropper you can't walk away from the problem because there's no place to walk to. The problem is mainstream life itself. When you have to struggle to live, you do.

## Struggling Against Managed Poverty

In Negros, as in most of the Philippine countryside, the main struggle is not "ideological;" it is a struggle

*Behold the  
management mentality:  
you put people in the  
midst of bountiful  
nature, and they will  
starve unless you  
manage them.*





*Militarization, complements of Coca Cola*

for the means of life: the land. It is important to understand that the land of Negros is rich. Several years ago when I was with a group that called on Provincial Governor Daniel Lacson, I asked him how, in a place with fertile soil, plenty of water, and greenery everywhere, people could be starving. His answer was prompt and confident: "Mismanagement!" Behold the management mentality: you put people in the midst of bountiful nature, and they will starve unless you manage them. Of course it's a lie; in fact the people of Negros have been managed into starvation. Their poverty is the result of a violent and exploitative political/economic structure. Take away the military and paramilitary forces (Cory's "total war") and the people would soon be farming their own land. They can do quite well without Governor Lacson's "management."

We know this is true because even now, with the apparatus of oppression in full operation, the people have succeeded in getting back thousands of hectares of land, which they are using to grow both food and cash crops. Driven from one area, they move to another and begin again. Defeated in one strategy they try a different one. The long-standing policy of the National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), called the Farm Lot Program, has been to persuade landowners who are not planting their sugar land anyway because of the collapse of world sugar prices, to let the sugar workers use it to grow food. Many landowners, faced with various degrees of public pressure, have agreed to do this. The Aquino regime's land reform law, weak as it is, makes it possible to gain legal title in some cases to land so gained. If this was all there was to it, land reform would proceed steadily. But

here the Philippines' landowner government shows its other face. By saying that farmers who want their own land must be communists or New People's Army (NPA) sympathizers, it can move in the military and begin operations, generating tens of thousands of "internal refugees."

We visited a village established by such internal refugees at a place called Payao. They had been driven from their homes in the southern part of the province by a collection of atrocities under the general heading of Operation Thunderbolt. First they escaped to Bacolod City, then with the help of some POs (People's Organizations, which in the Philippines are kept distinct from NGOs) and NGOs negotiating with the provincial government they were able to get the use of about 60 hectares of land at Payao. It is easy to see why: the place is a rocky moonscape.

The 89 families arrived there in 1990 and divided the land into family plots plus a commons. Since then they have been heaving up huge boulders to uncover little patches of soil. They have built homes for their families and a larger structure that serves as their chapel, daycare center and meeting hall. They have built a blacksmith shop where Endreng the blacksmith makes plows and other tools out of scrap metal. They have dug a well, and were just finishing a windmill to pump the water when we were there. The windmill, designed by villager Christito Baleriano, is the horizontal type made of split oil drums, that turns no matter which way the wind blows. The kids had discovered that it makes a lovely elevated merry-go-round. The villagers told us that their crops included corn, rice, casava, *kamote* (sweet potato), bananas, jackfruit, cashew, several kinds of beans, bitter melon and okra. This, we were told, gives them about a three-to-five-month food self-sufficiency; for the rest they must go out and do farm labor.

Of course the arm of government hardly reaches the village, except in the form of soldiers sent to harass them. Actual governance is something they must carry out of, by, and for themselves. Like so many villages in the Philippines they are trying to defy the "laws" of the capitalist free-market economy and build their community on cooperative principles. They have set aside ten hectares of their narrow land for community farming. Their

"government" is a general assembly that meets every 15 days, supported by committees: executive, health, security and disaster, education, socio-economic (it plans projects like the windmill) and finance. They are helped by organizers and experts from POs, but no one comes down from Governor Lacson's office to "manage" them.

Again, one is awed at the grit of these people — their determination, after being pushed this far, not only to live on, but to live well; that is, to live with dignity. I had the impression that their battle against despair has been a long one and that even now, though things are going a little better for them, it is not over. I talked to a man who had recently been tortured by government soldiers (there is a detachment nearby) after being falsely accused of stealing a carabao. Among other things, the soldiers had put a board across his chest and played see-saw, breaking his ribs. The others told me, he has not recovered yet, so he cannot work. Looking at his drooping head and lightless eyes, I wondered whether the wound that had not yet healed was not the one to his spirit. A woman told me that they have children in the village who saw their parents killed, children who if asked to draw a picture will draw attacking helicopters and severed limbs. When we asked the people if they want to return to their original village someday, they answered that they would prefer to stay where they are. It is better here, they said, because we have a school for our children. It is an elementary school that goes up to the fourth grade.

In addition to the refugee village at Payao, we visited several villages where the people — sugar workers — had managed to get some land of their own, at least partly liberating themselves from dependency on the landowners. Perhaps the most remarkable was the village of Panique. As the village is right next to a military detachment, we were asked to go make a courtesy call on the soldiers there, so that everything would be out in the open. It being the rainy season it took us a long time to get there, slogging through the sticky mud. When the sergeant who seemed to be in charge saw us arriving, he went inside his hut and changed from his sport shirt into his uniform. He served us coffee and boasted to me that he has a cousin or something in the U.S. Marines, and also that he is pretty sure that he is distantly related to NFSW Vice Chairman Serge Cherniguin.

After we returned there was a gathering in one

of the larger houses of the village, and the people described their situation. Of course there was no way we could know — certainly we could not ask — how much their situation, and their manner of describing it, was influenced by the fact that they were under virtual military occupation. At the same time it gave us a different sort of example of the people's tenacity and imagination: even with the military looking right down their throats, they go on struggling somehow to improve their lives.

### "Free to Work the Land"

In Panique the villagers have 75 hectares of land, of which they farm 57 collectively. They got control of it between 1984 and 86, during the height of the sugar crisis; the owner had no money to pay the workers, and so could not plant. They grow rice on the land ("You can't eat sugar," one farmer told us), and are trying to get legal title to it through the government land reform law, which gives preference to plantation land that has been left idle. As in Payao, the villagers here have a cooperative organization, with committees for the various functions. But probably because there was (we were almost sure) a military observer in the area, there was little talk of organization and none whatever about military harassment; most of the conversation was about the technical problems of rice farming.

Still, when we asked how the cooperative had changed the people's lives, the answers were enthusiastic. Before, they said, we ate only once or twice a day; now we eat at least twice and sometimes as many as four times ("I ate five times!" chimed in one man, and everybody laughed). But this "basic-needs" answer was not the first one they gave us, nor was it what they dwelled on the most. "Before, we were controlled, even our rest time was controlled. Now no one controls us, and we can rest when we want." "It is good with a landowner, because you can get benefits from the landowner. But it is better without one, because now we own the land." A woman said, "It is better now, because we are free to work with the land."

"Free to work with the land;" this is not a definition of freedom you will find in any textbook, nor one likely to be understood by intellectuals who have never had the experience of working with their hands. Not exactly political freedom, certainly not freedom from work, nor freedom to protest about work, but freedom as an aspect of the work itself. You and the land, sometimes in a

dialogue, sometimes locked in struggle, sometimes locked in mutual embrace, but always just you and the land: no landlord; no manager.

Apparently the process by which this freedom was achieved was not so smooth as it sounded at the meeting we attended. We heard later, from a different source, that in 1989 four of the leaders of this village were murdered at the office of the chief of police. Only one witness dared to speak. There was an attempt on his life, and after that he was kept in hiding for two years and accompanied to each hearing on the case by 200 farmers. His life was protected, but his family left him. The case was dismissed. Every village has stories like this.

### The Banana Operation

A third place we visited — this was actually the main purpose of our trip to the Philippines — was the banana production area at La Granja, in the foothills of Negros' highest mountain, Mt. Kanlaon. The Banana Operation, as it is known in the Philippines, is the most recent project worked out between JCNC and its counterpart Philippine NGOs. Since its founding in 1985 JCNC has been groping for ways of cooperating with the efforts of Negros sugar workers to become self-sufficient farmers, without falling into the pattern of "aid" (JCNC's slogan is "From 'aid' to 'sharing.'") While in the beginning JCNC did contribute to feeding programs (going through POs rather than the typical landowner-controlled NGOs), it has sought to put most of its efforts into such things as supporting the Farm Lot Program and other efforts by POs to establish cooperative projects. It also cooperated in the establishment of the Tuburan Training and Research Center, near Bacolod, where experiments are made with traditional (i.e. non-Green Revolution) seed and organic farming methods, and where sugar workers are taught the farming skills they can never learn chopping and hauling cane. In 1989 JCNC and its Philippine counterparts began a "people-to-people," middleman-free trade operation. Two corporations and one cooperative were established: Alter-Trade

Corporation (ATC) and the Banangon Growers Association (BGA) in the Philippines, and Alter-Trade Japan (ATJ) in Tokyo. First they began exporting brown sugar, then bananas.

### Just Price

When a movement organization sets up a corporation and begins buying and selling, it's natural to get suspicious. What is the difference between Alter-Trade and any other banana business? One of the most obvious differences is that Alter-Trade's bananas cost three times the market price in Japan. This of course goes against the logic of the market economy, and seems to suggest that the enterprise will soon go bankrupt. But this misses the point that the "alternative" envisioned by Alter-Trade is not only an alternative economy for the poor countries

of the South, but also an alternative to consumer behavior in the North. Does this mean that paying the high price is "charity"? No, but it does imply that the consumers must be educated to understand what the higher price means. The price is high, in the first place, because the bananas are not saturated with chemicals, and have to be shipped by air to Manila, otherwise they will spoil. This makes only a small difference to the health of the consumers,

but a very great difference to the health of the packers. Secondly, and more fundamentally, Alter-Trade pays a fair price to the growers and a fair wage to the packers. Third, for every banana sold, a percentage goes into the Self-Reliance Fund, to be used for health, education, and projects aimed at economic self-reliance, which means an eventual end to reliance on exports to Japan.

This is not charity, but justice. The idea that prices ought to be just is not some new-fangled invention; it is actually an ancient and natural way of thinking. For centuries before Europe became intoxicated with the notion of the free market — the idea that everything, including labor, should be purchased at the cheapest price available under competitive conditions — it was assumed that justice, not maximization of profit, was the proper standard for the prices of things. To pay a just price

*The idea that prices ought to be just is not some new-fangled invention; it is actually an ancient and natural way of thinking.*

meant to pay enough so the producer could not only do good quality work, but could also live a decent, healthy life. This simple, commonsense idea has been so driven from our minds by the ideology of the market economy that it takes effort now to grasp it. Paying a just price is not aid or charity, it is paying what one ought to pay for a product; it is paying what the product really costs. Here one can see a big difference between Alter-Trade and the typical "aid" mentality: while "aid" assumes that the solution to the North-South problem is to change ("develop") the South so as to more closely resemble the North, Alter-Trade assumes that there can be no solution without fundamental changes in the way of thinking of the people in the North.



*Banana growers at La Granja*

In fact, this is being done: it is one of Alter-Trade's most interesting successes. The bananas, which are distributed mainly through Japan's co-op system, sell well, and the consumers feel privileged to buy them. They see it less as "helping" than as a form of human relations, something that places them in a decent relationship with some of their fellow humans in the Philippines. And in fact hundreds of consumers have travelled to the Philippines to visit the place where their bananas come from and to meet personally the people who grow and pack them. Alter-Trade has even sent groups of high school students to La Granja. The students, whose lives in overdeveloped Japan are divided between studies of dubious value and entertainments of dubious pleasure, come back awed and humbled by the spirit, courage and sense of purpose of the people their age in Negros. "They are much more advanced than we are," said one Japanese high school girl. In a world flooded with propaganda about the "poor, ignorant, helpless" people in the South, this is quite a discovery.

### **Commonwealth Accumulation**

I have used the expression "just price," but this is only relative. In fact while the growers and packers receive more than they would get from an ordinary company, it is still a miserably low price by the standards of the Northern economies. Allen Flores, a banana grower from the town of Bais, told us that he liked the BGA because it paid a fixed price. Whereas before he got between P50 and P120 for

two sixty kg. baskets of bananas, now he can always get P180. Though different people there, speaking from memory, gave us different figures, it seems that the growers have been able to approximately double their incomes (they still also get income from selling vegetables and charcoal) to over P1000 (US\$40) per month. This kind of change really matters: the growers told us that whereas before BGA they were eating only one meal with rice per day, now they eat three. Moreover, as the income is relatively steady (barring such things as the Super Typhoon that levelled all their homes and crops in 1990), it is possible to plan. With the money they have put into the common fund (three centavos per banana) they have set up training programs to help them expand their farming activities beyond their traditional skills. This does not mean importing advanced technology from the North, but learning how to grow fruits and vegetables, and raise livestock, according to methods known elsewhere in the Philippines, but not practiced traditionally in their own valley. After the typhoon two years ago they worked out a five year plan, aimed mainly at putting more land under cultivation and expanding the variety of their crops. This closely resembles what the economists call capital accumulation, but it is importantly different. Since they are organized as a cooperative, what is accumulated by these projects is their commons, or common wealth. We may thus call it a process of Commonwealth Accumulation.

And as at Payao and Panique, here too the people talked more about the political and social gains than about the strictly economic ones. When

we asked villagers how the BGA has changed their lives, one man laughed that without it he never would have met so many Japanese. Speaking more seriously, he said it was good to know that there are people outside the Philippines who care. Others pointed out that the BGA has also helped the local people to come to know each other. A woman said that before BGA when villagers passed each other on the mountain trails they would give only a perfunctory greeting. Now they stop and ask each other how they are doing, because now it matters to each how the others are doing. There is more communication now, she said, more sharing. The sharing is more important than the economic gains, another said. But what is important to see here is that sharing is an economic gain. When one lives in a community that is organized as a cooperative, one has a security—freedom from fear of destitution—that cannot be found in a community where each family is in market competition with all the others. This is true at all levels of affluence or poverty.

### **Community-Embedded Economics**

The packing operation is also interesting. Bananas are delivered from ten different villages (of which Bais is one) in rotation, and packing goes on three times a week. Packing requires the labor of some 30 to 50 people, and originally that was how it was done. But later the community decided to organize shifts so as to share the work and wages among some 200 people. This is the kind of "inefficient" choice no manager would make. It is also not the kind of choice that would be made in a community where powerful elites control the choices. But it is natural enough, in a community where decisions are made by the whole, to decide to share widely a lower wage. We were told that it is mostly unemployed or underemployed sugar workers who do the packing; when we visited we found that these were mostly women and school-age children, with a scattering of adult men. The atmosphere was totally unlike the fruit-packing plants in, for example, California, where the piece-rate system drives workers to a frenzy of activity. Here the system is that you work five hours or until 200 boxes are packed, whichever comes first, so there is no reason to hurry. The packers were working at a human pace, talking and laughing. The young boys were folding and stapling the cardboard boxes, and obviously enjoying it with a great sense of self-importance. The women were washing and drying

the bananas, work that must be done since no chemicals are used, and decay can be prevented only if the bananas are clean and dry. For this each packer received P66 a day, or P198 (US\$8) per week. The idea is that the three afternoons of work per week will provide a supplement to the family incomes of the workers, in addition to being a contribution to the community Self-Reliance Fund. In fact, for some of the families it is their main source of income.

The processing operation was organized by the Basic Christian Community (BCC) of La Granja. Father Terrence, the young and energetic priest there, told us that the connection is meant to be temporary, as the goal is for BGA to become independent of the BCC. But the character of the BGA has been deeply affected by its BCC origins. While it is an economic operation, its "economics" is not something that can be simply calculated in the familiar terms of production, efficiency and profit. Rather it is an economics embedded in a rich understanding of a community united in spirit. Of course, the fact that there is an economic program at all is a sharp departure from church practice in the past, when the priests taught the poor that their misery should be borne, as it was the very thing that would get them happiness in the next world. In liberation theology as understood in this community, Father Terrence told us, faith is not an opium; the church is not something that just carries out sacrament and liturgy but a community of believers, body and soul together; and the soul is something that fares best when housed inside a body that is healthy and well-fed, in a community united by the sense of dignity that comes from the understanding that human beings have rights. One does not need to be a Christian to see what kind of strength a community can gain by this kind of understanding. A purely economic project will fail as soon as it is defeated in the fierce competition of the capitalist free market. A purely spiritual project will leave the people starving and oppressed as before. An economic project embedded in a community spirit like that in La Granja has a strong chance to survive. This is not reformism: the changes in people's lives are radical and fundamental. It is also not an "experimental model:" the changes are real, they are happening. La Granja, and the other cooperative communities in Negros are an alternative world struggling to come into being, and actually in being, now. ■



# Backs against the Wall

## Interview with Serge Cherniguin

By Douglas Lummis

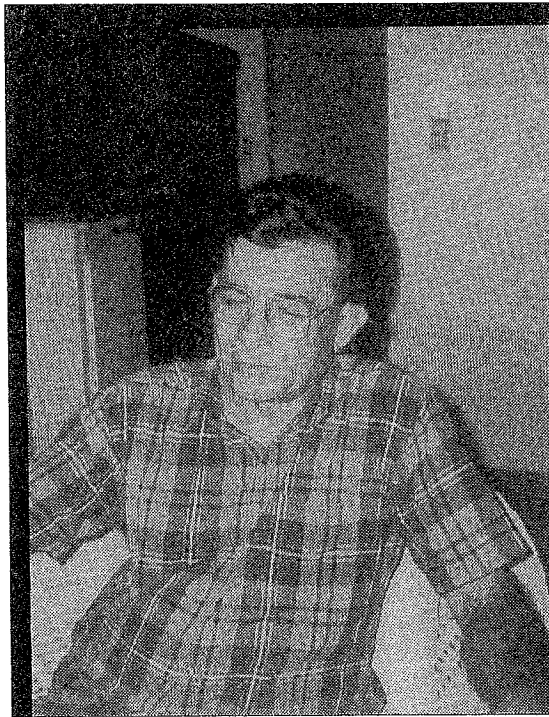
*Nong Serge, as people call Cherniguin in Negros, is a Filipino of Russian descent. He is vice chairman of the Negros-based National Federation of Sugar Workers (NFSW), which has worked since the early 1970s to improve the lives of the oppressed workers of the island and of the Philippines in general. This interview was conducted on August 5, 1992.*

**Lummis:** Could you first tell us about your father, who first came to the Philippines?

**Cherniguin:** He was at the time in the Chinese Army. Of course he was fighting for the Tsar against the Bolsheviks. At the end of the war, they surrendered, and it seemed that they were allowed, according to my mother, to sell their poor cavalry horses, and together with the Russian navy they sold their boats and they went to Shanghai. My father told me he was so tired of war.

**Lummis:** What was your father's name?

**Cherniguin:** His name was also Sergei. His middle name was E, as in Elephant, Cherniguin. I've forgotten now the place where he came from. He took his father's place in the army when he was 14 years old. At the end of the war they went to Shanghai,



Serge Cherniguin

then from Shanghai to Mindanao. And it was there in Shanghai that he saw many Russians of royal blood, who had always lived off the people. They didn't even know how to thread a needle. So with no income in Shanghai they became prostitutes.

My father then went to Mindanao and worked for a lumber company. Then later he moved to Negros, and was hired as an overseer for one of the sugar cane plantations.

**Lummis:** Do you know why he chose Mindanao and Negros?

**Cherniguin:** At that time, everyone was going to Mindanao. There was a big lumber business going on there. Later he went to Negros, because at that time many sugar planters were hiring Russians as their overseers. You know, the Russians, they could command, and they could scare the sugar workers to work. So my father was hired. In fact, I think he did a good job for the landowner, because later on it was the landowner who sent me to school. It was the same landowner I later worked for and resigned from.

**Lummis:** What school did he send you to?

**Cherniguin:** I attended the Araneta Institute of

Agriculture. And then when I came to Negros, I worked in the farm, started as an overseer.

My mother was a sugar worker. She was working in the field where my father was the overseer. So they got married, and they had five children, four girls and myself. In La Carlota, I worked as an overseer, and then later on I was transferred to Victorias. My last job was assistant administrator. I was running six sugar plantations.

It was then that this liberation theology... because in Negros it's the custom of the sugar planters to allow priests to preach the mission every three years in the sugar plantations, and the mission, you know, it's very spiritual, forgive your sins, turn your other cheek. But that particular mission in 1971 was of liberation theology. So it really opened up a lot of questions that had been in my mind, the chief of which was, I saw the oppression and the exploitation, the suffering of the people in the plantations. And I had thought I was quite trying to be a good Christian...

*Lummis:* Do you remember what the priest said that was so impressive?

*Cherniguin:* Well, particularly, he said that it's not the will of God that people suffer poverty, but it is instead the will of man, and that if I look deeper, that working in a sugar plantation, where there is oppression and exploitation going on in the system, the hacienda system, I'm actually helping those who are oppressing the people. So it disturbed me so much.

Then what I did first was to work the hacienda very well, and at the same time I treated the workers very well. Then the production went up, and later on the landowner complained about profits. So I became quite disgusted and I resigned.

*Lummis:* Why did he complain if the production went up?

*Cherniguin:* Well, because he was more interested in making profits. You know, to run a very good farm, you have expenses. For example, all the workers were given social security numbers, and then medicare numbers, medicare contributions for individual workers. And of course, there was an increase in wages.

*Lummis:* So you were increasing their wages and damaging the system.

*Cherniguin:* Yes. Of course. I had to talk with the landowner first. But it seemed like I was the one agitating for an increase in wages. Instead of the workers. He conceded they were quite healthy. Anyway, he became disgusted because the production was quite good. At first, he said something about making the workers contented, but he didn't know that I really would make them contented by really giving them something.

And so I resigned, and worked with another sugar landowner, and it so happened that the situation, that the way this landowner treated his workers was even worse than the one I'd just left. So I became quite disillusioned. And the priests knew beforehand my predicament. In fact, they offered me a job.

*Lummis:* Who offered you a job?

*Cherniguin:* The priest who was preaching liberation theology. He introduced me to the union, then, the NFSW.

*Lummis:* The union already existed?

*Cherniguin:* Yes, it was already founded. I joined in 1975. Some of the organizers were not disposed to receive me, because I had been working on the management side. At the hacienda in Victorias where I was transferred from La Carlota, they were also organizing the workers there, and there were even moments when the security guard at the plantation told me that any organizer that entered the plantation would be shot. I was accepted at the union, but there was some, not really resentment, but it was in that situation. At first I was working on the economic project of the union. So I saw the work of the union, and I was quite impressed. That's precisely why I left my job, because I knew the oppression. In the union, I saw that they were being helped.

So I asked my wife, should I work in the union as a mere employee working during the day and go home at five, or should I really immerse myself helping people? And it took us a long time to decide. Then one of my children got sick, and of course in the hospital you could see the situation of the people. One of the patients in the hospital was



*Working the fields – Photo courtesy of Iida Noriko*

a child from the sugar plantation in Mulsha, and the landowner was at that time in America on vacation. In his farm nobody would sign for the medicare, so his father had to look for every centavo to pay for all the hospital fees and the father was of course without money. Eventually the child died. The father was forced to take the child out when the child wasn't cured.

And there was also the son of a rich man from La Carlota. His child was a 32-year-old man with mongolism, and they stayed nearly as long as my child stayed, over a month. And we heard that the mongoloid child incurred a 40,000-plus pesos medical bill. So that I shared with my wife. I told her that if you are rich, you really can buy your life. But

if you're poor, you'll die. So I said it's better if we help the poor. We were talking about this on the way back to La Carlota, and I even remember the place where she agreed that I would immerse myself in work. So after that I really worked very hard.

*Lummis:* What year was this?

*Cherniguin:* It was in 1976. Later on there was a land occupation in Bacolod. There was vacant land at St. Juan del Monte, and the sugar workers asked the landowner if they could use the land because after harvest there would still be time to plant sugarcane in November. It was around July and the rice crop would only take four months. But the landowner refused. Anyway the workers went ahead and planted. The whole eleven hectares were finished in four days, because many organized sugar workers came to help. So later on there was a dialogue. And then the people

were arrested in the presence of the bishop. Everybody was put in prison, including mothers with babies in their arms.

At that time, the union was also providing implements for land cultivation, like spades. I brought some to St. Juan del Monte in a sack, and the informer informed the police that I was bringing armaments. It was the days of Marcos, and there was this arrest and seizure order. So they put out an arrest order for me. I had to hide for 18 days in the convent. The police were searching for me.

They were actually looking for me at the office. After 18 days I heard the prisoners were released. There was an order from Marcos to open the prison doors, because in America, in Connecticut and in



Hawaii, the union refused to unload Philippine sugar.

*Lummis:* Again. What year?

*Cherniguin:* That was in 1979. Out of the 127 people that were arrested, some were mothers with babies in their arms, so I think the following day the mothers were released first, then old women who were getting sick inside the jail, because the jail was newly painted, and the smell was so bad some of the workers were fainting inside. An organizer of the NFSW was arrested together with the people, and they were torturing him, boxing him, every time he fainted they'd bring him out into the rain. When he recovered they'd take him back inside for interrogation. But after 18 days all the workers were released. So I also came out from hiding.

After that, I went on with my work. I was elected as executive secretariat. And later on, I was elected to secretary general. Then later on I became vice president until now. I do not like to open this really, but I was very much honored because in the recent election I got the highest votes of all the officers. So I have the feeling that the workers have given me their confidence, so I must really try my best to serve them.

### **The Union's Work**

The work of the union has two aspects, organizing workers into the union, and then the issues of land and agrarian reform. There is always this issue of hunger. For example, there was a period in 1976 when a lot of labor cases filed by the union were dismissed by the Department of Labor, although the cases were very just, because the non-implementation of wages is very rampant. At that time the Department of Labor had no time to type the dismissed cases. It was just on the black board. And every afternoon quite a file was delivered to the office. All the cases were dismissed. And so the organizers, because the problem in Negros is the hunger of the people, they decided they might as well not struggle for legal rights, public actions, because they were all dismissed in the courts.

So they decided to campaign for agrarian reform. As early as 1977-78, up to '79, there were rallies in Negros for agrarian reform. And at that time, a lot of sugar workers got jailed, because the mention of the land, you know it really touches the interests of the sugar planters. So in 1979, there was

an assessment in the union, and it was discovered that there were even sugar planters who were sympathetic to the union, but when the issue of land came up it created a lot of resentment and we lost friends. So they decided that the union would pursue trade union activities again.

*Lummis:* That meant to stop talking about land reform?

*Cherniguin:* Yes. But the union couldn't separate itself from the hunger of the sugar workers and from time to time there were people who were arrested. During the campaign for agrarian reform, the union instituted a program for planting on vacant land, and that was also one of the reasons why a lot of people were imprisoned. In fact, some were even killed for planting the vacant land without permission. One of the most touching stories was about a grandmother who cleared and planted a piece of land on a hillside, and then later on it was planted by the plantation with sugarcane. What this grandmother did was to remove the cane, because her rice was growing there already. She was shot by the guard, even though her grandchild was beside her. On another occasion a group of union organizers were accused by the landowner for 28 different crimes. It took the lawyers eight years to have all those charges, dismissed. But the people were in prison for eight years, on framed-up charges. They had been organizing the workers, and the workers were threatening to plant the sides of the fields.

Then the sugar crisis came, and there was much hunger in Negros. The Farm Lot Program actually started during a demonstration for Aquino. On the 25th of every month we held a demonstration, and at one of the demonstrations, on August 25th, the sugar planters went with the workers, because the sugar planters would also rally against Marcos, since at that time the Philippine sugar industry had been nationalized by Marcos, and the planters wanted to do the marketing of their own sugar. So in that demonstration, one of the sugar planters was a speaker, and she said that at that time, the sugar workers in Negros were hungry because the planters had no money, and they were not able to give the usual rice advances which are payable when the milling season comes. She said that nearly half of their land was idle because there was no money to plant sugarcane.

So right there, in the plaza of Bacolod City, we proposed to the sugar planters, that they lend their vacant land to the workers, and the union would sign a letter of guarantee that the land would be returned in time. So after that, a lot of land, 4,000 hectares, were allowed by the sugar planters to be used by the workers to plant. This was 1986.

At that time, President Aquino came to power and she promised agrarian reform, and so we pushed for its implementation. There was an attempt by the government of Negros to implement the 60-30-10, wherein 60 percent of the land would be retained by the sugar planters, 30 percent would be turned over to agribusiness, and 10 percent would be given to the sugar workers for their home lots and their gardens. At first we accepted, because sugar workers were really hungry; at that time in Negros some 250,000 families were hungry. But even if we accepted the 60-30-10, we told the governor that this is not agrarian reform for us. This is only temporary.

So when agrarian reform came, some sugar plantations were turned over to the sugar workers. Since 1985-86 the union has also had a program to teach sugar workers how to plant food. It goes hand in hand with the union organizing.

So until now, this still goes on. We still have union organizing, we still have agrarian reform where sugar plantations are being turned into cooperatives, worked by the workers.

**Lummis:** You had 4,000 hectares of Farm Lot land in 1986. How many do you have now?

**Cherniguin:** The Farm Lots were borrowed vacant land. There are now only a few hundred hectares, but 9,000 hectares have already been turned over to the workers under agrarian reform. So we have both land that is turned over to the workers under the agrarian reform program, and we still have land that is borrowed. Because in all our collective bargaining agreements, a piece of land is always included for the workers as part of the agreement, land where they can plant food. And sometimes,

there are instances where the planters are not able to pay the back wages of the workers. For example, the minimum wage is 60 pesos/day (US\$2.50), and they pay only 30 or 40, so the difference sometimes reaches hundreds of thousands of pesos. Sometimes if the planters cannot pay that, the workers get the land, including the title.

And now, we still continue to push for agrarian reform, because here in Negros, Aquino's agrarian reform law is considered by the peasants as anti-agrarian. It's really pro-landowner, because there are so many provisions that really work against the workers' interests. Here in Negros, it's because of the strength of the people's organizations that they are able to occupy lands, not just because of agrarian reform. These lands are occupied by the people,

and they are in the process of being turned over to the workers. The workers in turn make them into cooperatives. We are hoping that eventually all the sugar plantations in Negros will be made into workers' cooperatives, because...

**Lummis:** All?

**Cherniguin:** All. We are hoping that *all* will be made into workers' cooperatives. Sugar workers are still way below the living wage. And the

feudal relationship goes on, and then the sugar industry's very unstable, and the hardship of the people... The only solution is to release the land to the people under the agrarian reform program of the government.

In 1987, there was a province-wide campaign in Negros Occidental by the military to break up cooperatives, because they said that cooperatives were communistic. These cooperative farm lots started because when the workers borrowed land from the landowners, because there was hunger, all of the people had to work on that land. They had to do it communally. At first, we used to call them communal farms, but because "communal" sounds like "communism," we changed it to "cooperative." But the system is still the same. Later on, though, the military came out to break up the cooperatives.

But our thrust is still to cooperativize the land

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long already.*

obtained by the people. There are instances where workers work on the land individually. So we also allow that. And what we are teaching the people, also, is sustainable agriculture and of course that includes ecology.

There's a lot of training necessary for the sugar workers, just in bookkeeping alone. They have to be taught how to raise animals, how to plant crops, how to organize the cooperatives, and of course it really taxes the union, because we have to feed our organizers. We also have training courses in relation to the union work for our organizers.

And of course we still have the problem of militarization. We have been branded as communists or communist-infiltrated, because in actuality we are working really against the interests of the sugar planters, and the sugar planters are very powerful. One who is a friend of the Union told us, "We know your objective. You're organizing the workers to receive better wages, but also eventually you'd like to get my land, to be distributed to the workers." And actually that's what we're doing. So the sugar planters are not really very happy. But we feel also that by right the land already belongs to the sugar workers, because they had to work on it so long already. Even their grandparents before them were working, were slaving on that land. And in Philippine society, the richest and the most elite are the sugar planters of Negros. And there are some, few, enlightened sugar planters who say that it's about time that we give the land to the workers, because we have made use of them, it has enriched us including our children. Our stand is that the government must be the one to pay for the land, the smaller the land the higher the price. The big land amounting to several thousand hectares, should be bought by the government, at a much cheaper price, and must be given to the workers at a very, very low price. The government is not going to sell the land to the workers as if they were selling real estate.

**Lummis:** How much personal danger have you experienced in doing this?

**Cherniguin:** Everybody in the Union is threatened. The Union was founded in 1971, and during the 12 years of Marcos martial law, there were 24 union organizers and leaders killed. But during the six-year period of Aquino, there were 47 union organizers and leaders killed. So now we have some 70-

plus. So it's quite dangerous. Now there are more than one hundred chapters, very active chapters, where there are military detachments, and the going in and out of the people is really very difficult under this "total war" policy of Aquino. Once you're suspected of communism, they'll kill you just any time. So when you speak of danger, of course it's quite dangerous for everybody, but you also have to remember that the organizers at the local level are in a more dangerous position than we officials in the city.

Of course there are warnings, there are telephone threats, there are letters, and we have to hide from time to time. But it seems a part, really, of working for the Union. And when you are in a place where a lot of people are suffering, and you're angry at the situation, you cease to be afraid. Especially when from time to time you have to bury your friends, organizers, who you know have been working for the people with very little allowances. Some have to leave their families just to organize. And you have to bury them. It's a very, very sad thing. And sometimes, when we bury our organizers, we bring them to the church, and then of course we parade the body. Sometimes the military threatens us, they block us. It really makes you quite angry. So the tendency, of course, is, you cease to be afraid.

Sometimes mothers see their sons disappear. Sometimes young wives of organizers see their husbands disappear. And you see them crying in the office. There was even a time when there were three families in the office, and the wife was crying, the children were crying, and it was really very painful. But then if you take it into the overall context, the situation is like that, and unless people risk their lives, what will happen? So if you are afraid, if you are afraid for your own safety, you cannot help but think that there is some greed in you, while others are... The situation is like that.

Of course we have so many friends in other countries, and they say, "Well, you are quite brave." But we tell them that we're in a situation where our back is against the wall. That those people who hope to have solidarity with us, they're also doing much. Because those people could or could not. They are more free. Whereas we in Negros, we have no other choice. So it's like that. There has been a lot of danger, but it's all a part of it. And sometimes you're even happy, at least you show your solidarity, you stand also as a witness. ■



# People's Theater in Negros

## Interview with Jane David



*Performing in Japan*

*Jane David is a member of Negros Theater League (NTL). This interview was done when she came to Japan to give a series of concerts. The interviewer, Nacco, first encountered NTL at a cultural festival, MAKI-ISA, which she attended in Manila in December 1983. They used many folk songs from Negros as they did a play about the lives of sugar workers. It was a sad story, but contained humor as well. The audience sometimes cried, sometimes laughed, and at the end gave the group a standing ovation.*

**David:** The cultural movement in Negros started in the late 1960s, during the student demonstrations. Some students formed a cultural group called "Gintungsilahis," which means the golden race. They were a political arm of the student activists. When Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, though, many activists were in Luzon. Some went into hiding, and others were killed. Gintungsilahis had already disappeared because of the situation. In 1979, then, a community theater was organized. It was only in one community, however, and the members were mostly students from different schools.

The initiative came from the dioceses as a cultural arm. There were three components: the Student Catholic Action of the Philippines, this community theater, and the University of the Philippines San Youth Organization.

In the middle of the 70s, FCAN (Federation of Concerned Artists of Negros) organized students

in the schools and colleges, and the UP San Youth Organization worked with community youths who were out of school. In the late 70s, however, Marcos took an aggressive posture toward organizations, and began issuing decrees against them. At the time FCAN was in upheaval because of so many threats. Also, most of the people didn't receive any salary, and they were forced to look for jobs. Some went out to different organizations to find jobs. Then, in 1979, PETA (Philippines Educational Theater Association) gave its first workshop.

**Nacco:** In Negros there are many regional organizations. What is the Negros Theater League (NTL) that you also belong to?

**David:** CAP (Concerned Artists of the Philippines) was formed as a broad umbrella, and NTL became one of the members. Its thrust, though, was more on stage and theater. This was a change, though,

because NTL was once the umbrella organization, but when CAP/Negros was organized NTL became just one of the members of this new umbrella. At the time we also organized Manipathin, which means *troubadour*, or singing. There was a new music group, dance groups, as well as the visual artists organization. There were literary groups, of course, but no names yet.

*Nacco:* So there were four sectors in CAP/Negros?

*David:* Yes, but we called them disciplines. But the purpose of CAP/Negros was very limited. It was unfocused, and this was the same for NTL. At the time there were a lot of community cultural organizations. This is why we thought it would be better to expand. We didn't think CAP/Negros could respond to all these things.

We didn't have any coordination either. There was supposed to be a national center in Manila, which was supposed to give updates and information. But they weren't very active, although they did invite people to attend workshops and activities.

CAP lasted for five years. Although we developed more experience, we didn't get any formal training. Some of us did, but just basic training. In 1981 and 1982 they gave theater workshops, and I got training from PETA at that time. Then 1983 was the assassination of Aquino.

*Nacco:* So in 1988 you formed a group with the participation of 24 cultural organizations from Negros.

*David:* Well, it was still being organized then. But yes, we had a consultation meeting. Before that we travelled around and met with people who had already formed cultural organizations. So we went there, consulted with them on their situations and movements. They're very active.

There were many cultural organizations that existed. We wanted to bind them together. So we proposed founding a federation, and asked them what they thought. So we didn't simply impose from the center. We founded a federation, and we consulted. After those years of consultations, and after a series of alternative happenings, we called for a meeting. The leaders went to Negros, and we discussed setting up a federation. So in 1989 the Federation of Concerned Artists of Negros was

organized. Our objectives were:

- 1) To promote a nationalist, democratic and scientific culture;
- 2) to educate and disseminate information on issues that affect people's development through various artistic forms;
- 3) to preserve and develop our ancestral, traditional and indigenous culture against those who seek to destroy it;
- 4) to liberate the Filipino from the bondage of colonial and feudal culture that causes the backwardness of our country; and
- 5) to unite the artists and writers to actively participate in pursuing the people's hope and aspiration for a sovereign Philippines.

*Nacco:* According to what you're saying, artists in the Philippines are always organized within history. In Japan this is very rare. In the postwar period, one party tried to organize artists, but only for a propaganda culture, and the results were very bad. Artists in Japan still worry about that experience. In other words, when political activity and expression become the same, this leads to stereotyping. What do people feel about this in the Philippines?

*David:* Well, one thing is that if you organize a group, it's simpler to hear this big voice. You can expand. It's better, because you cannot convince people if you're alone, or if you're talking to them alone. It's better to have partners, and together you can organize people. You have the strength to really share. This is our situation. For example, I can paint the situation with my own paintings.

What's really important is to live with the people, go with the people, share and eat with the people. I think this is one way to convince people. So that's what we do.

It's hard to be influential if you work all alone. That's one reason why we organize. In terms of our own history, we did a lot by ourselves. It would have been better in some ways if somebody had given us training, but on the other hand we developed within our own situation.

*Nacco:* In the last few years, you've had many internal refugees in Bacolod. I'd like to ask about what activities you've done with them.

*David:* In terms of getting data, we go to where



*Giving a workshop in Negros*

It says, "All my people, listen to our story. I will tell you why we evacuated our land. I will tell you everything about our situation. There are many vigilante groups being organized, and they want us to join. But we don't want to join the vigilantes, for we're just ordinary farmers. We're not supporting the NPA or the rebels, and we're not supporting the military. We're just common people. But we're in the war zone." That's the basic story.

The story was told to us by a farmer we met. It was an ad-lib story at the time, and was the story of his own experience. So we wrote it down, and performed it at many concerts. We also used folk songs from Negros in our performances.

they are. For example, internal refugees were staying in a small church in Behalda for almost six months. We have a play about internal refugees, so we were able to go there and get information. We could easily participate in their lives.

**Nacco:** So you try to hear their life stories and create dramas and songs through their experiences?

**David:** What we do is quite different from me just talking to you about them. You can't feel it, of course. But for us, as performers, we already believe we are internal refugees ourselves. This is because we can feel their real situation.

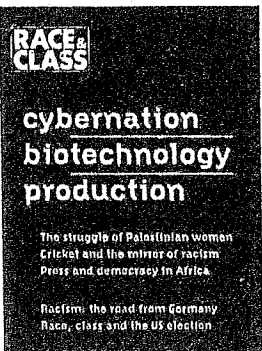
Sometimes we sleep together with them, especially during demonstrations in Bacolod, because it gets too late and they can't go home. When this happens we don't go home either. We stay with them, and also experience sleeping in the street.

**Nacco:** I'd like to ask about your song "Composo." The lyrics are a story, aren't they?

**David:** Actually, Composo is a musical narrative derived from traditional folk songs. But it tells a story that was created by an internal refugee. It tells of how the people suffered and finally had to give up their lands.

**Nacco:** The story is very much about the present situation. Because it contains criticism of the military, have you experienced any censorship, or any harrassment from fanatic groups?

**David:** Well, we sometimes have problems. What we do is dangerous, and of course we experience harrassment and imprisonment. They come to our houses, and our members are sometimes arrested. Sometimes we're shaken when somebody gets killed, especially somebody we know. ■



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## Boutros-Ghali's Plans: Coming UNTACked in Cambodia

By Jens Wilkinson

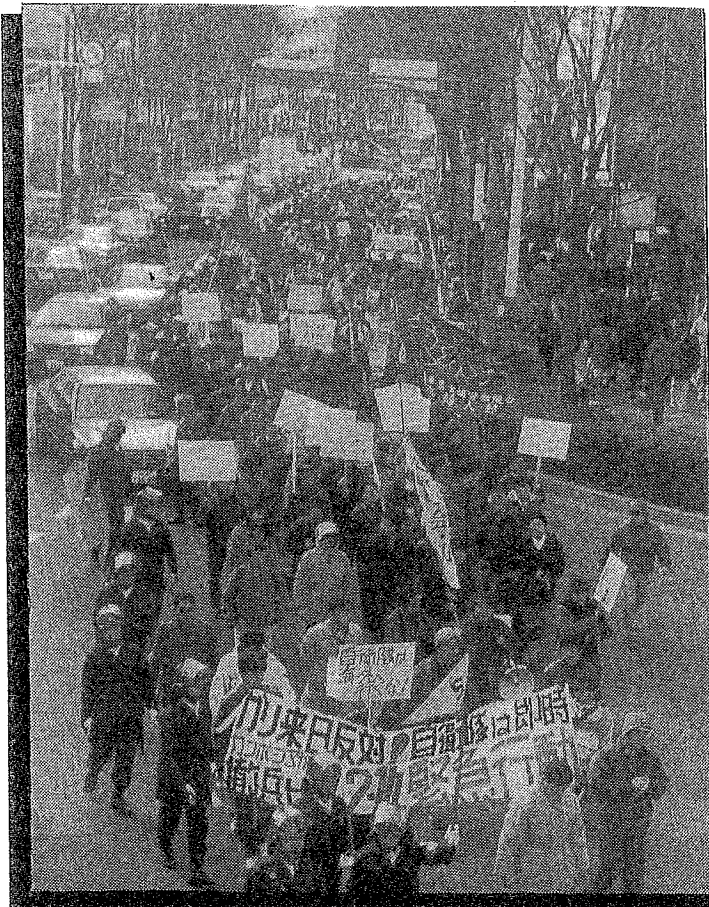
In June 1992, UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued a 52-page report, commonly known as "An Agenda for Peace," which called among other things for the creation of a heavily-armed UN "rapid deployment force" and the use of "peace enforcement" in UN operations. Then, on February 3, 1993, just a few weeks before his recent visit to Japan, (ostensibly to attend the opening ceremony of the United Nations University's new building, but in reality, it is believed, to pressure the Japanese government to support his "rapid deployment force" plan (Ikeda Itsunori, *Hahei Check* #5)) he gave an interview to Kyodo News Service and issued an explosive pronouncement. "My hope," he stated bluntly, "is that the government of Japan will be able to change the Constitution so that it will allow the Japanese forces to participate in operations of peace enforcement." (*Japan Times*, June 5, 1993) In reference to Japan's hopes of becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council, he even suggested a linkage with participation in his plan, saying that a bigger Japanese role would "facilitate" a "greater political role" in the UN. This all added up to a singularly undiplomatic attempt to intervene, not only in the internal affairs of a member state, but in a country's very legal structure.

Boutros-Ghali later retracted the statement, but it would be wrong to believe that a pronouncement of this nature loses its effect simply by being "retracted." His words were particularly ironic in contrast to a letter signed by a member of the Peace-keeping Operations staff, Mary Eliza Kimball, which appeared in the last issue (24-1) of

AMPO, where she stated that at the time the PKO Bill was being debated in Japan, "We were extremely vigilant not to express any position or make any statement that might be interpreted as taking any side in or attempting to influence this debate. Such an action would have been a violation of the obligation of the United Nations, under Article 2(7) of the Charter, not to intervene in the domestic affairs of any State." Japan is obviously not the only country that has been recently subjected to violations of this prescription. Somalia is a prime example, and so is Cambodia, as we shall see later.

By the time Boutros-Ghali had arrived in Tokyo on February 15, he had modified his position to the one supported by Prime Minister Miyazawa, namely that Japan should participate in Peace-keeping Operations within the framework of its own Constitution. Even this, though, was simply a retreat from the first statement, which was difficult for even certain sectors of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to accept. He did continue to stress, as he did in a speech at Waseda University, that Japan would have a "special contribution to make" in strengthening the United Nations. This point, clearly, is what he really wanted in the first place. The reference to constitutional amendment can only be seen as diplomatic blunder. It is possible, of course, that it wasn't his own blunder, that somebody else asked him to suggest the amendment, but this is mere speculation.

There were several protests in Japan against the secretary general's visit. On February 14, the eve of his arrival, about 350 protesters gathered in Tokyo's Miyashita Park to protest his coming. Ota



*The February 14 Rally in Tokyo – Photo by Yamamoto Hideo*

Masakuni addressed the rally, saying that "Using the UN as a maneuver, the idea of contribution to the international community is being changed to mean obeying the ruling classes of the big powers. Under Boutros-Ghali this trend has become more and more conspicuous." (*Hahei Check #6*) On February 16th, as Boutros-Ghali was addressing an audience at the new building of the United Nations University in Tokyo, a group of approximately 30 protesters gathered outside holding banners with messages such as "peace cannot be achieved by the force of arms." The group met with the Secretary-General of the University, Vagn Kjellberg, and handed him a statement opposing the strengthening of the UN military functions and Japanese Self-Defense Forces participation in Peace-keeping Operations to be delivered to Boutros-Ghali.

#### **LDP Reactions to the Boutros-Ghali Plan**

The LDP remains split on the necessity of amend-

ing the Constitution. They have essentially agreed, needless to say, that Japan should send military forces abroad, but disagree on the framework under which this should happen. Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi has remained firm in his position that the participation is possible under the present Constitution, and that a "reinterpretation," not amendment, will be sufficient.

Miyazawa's camp was boosted by the final report of the Ozawa Commission, an ad-hoc research panel within the LDP headed by Ozawa Ichiro, which suggested that Japan could participate, within the present constitutional framework, even within the peace enforcement operations envisaged by Boutros-Ghali. The report concluded that the interpretation that Article 9 of the Constitution prohibited the use of force beyond self-defense of national territory was "no longer valid."

On the other side, however, Foreign Minister Watanabe Michio urged in a January 23 Diet speech that there should be a stronger Japanese participation in UN Peace-keeping activities, indirectly implying a modification of the Constitution to allow it.

On February 3, Mitsuzuka Hiroshi, the head of the LDP's Policy Affairs Research Council, proposed that Article 9 be amended so that UN decisions could supersede its provisions. He raised again the issue of the Security Council seat, saying that Japan would be criticized if it assumed a permanent seat without settling the constitutional issue.

#### **Judgment Day in Cambodia?**

Cambodia in a sense represents a watershed in United Nations activity. Special-Representative Akashi Yasushi emphasized this when he told the *Far Eastern Economic Review* (November 5, 1992) that the \$2.8 billion Cambodia operation is a "vitaly important experiment for the UN... If UNTAC (United Nations Transitional Administration in Cambodia) is successful, that is very important for the future of the organization." But just what is this future organization that Akashi spoke of? In order to understand it, it's perhaps necessary to examine



the concrete actions the United Nations has taken in Cambodia.

The Agreements on a Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict signed in Paris on October 23, 1991 sets out sweeping powers for UNTAC, the organization set up by the UN to uphold the agreements. Section B of Annex 1, which specifies UNTAC's mandate, states that, "In accordance with Article 6 of the Agreement, all administrative agencies, bodies and offices acting in the field of foreign affairs, national defense, finance, public security and information will be placed under the direct control of UNTAC, which will exercise it as necessary to ensure strict neutrality. In this respect, the Secretary-General's Special Representative will determine what is necessary and may issue directives to the above-mentioned administrative agencies, bodies and offices. Such directives may be issued and will bind all Cambodian Parties." The wording is "all Cambodian Parties," but in fact all Cambodian people are bound by law to obey the police, for instance, and so the phrase might as well read, "bind all Cambodians."

This power could be considered dangerous even if it were only on paper. But it has taken a concrete reality. In Cambodia, a United Nations operation has been given the power to arrest and prosecute people suspected of criminal activities. On January 7, UNTAC announced it would form a special prosecutor's office and court system designed to indict, prosecute, sentence and imprison people responsible for political crimes. On January 11, UNTAC made its first arrest. (*Far East Economic Review*, January 21, 1993)

This, along with the decision made in the fall of 1992 to put restrictions on the press, where "media control officers" would be stationed in the publishing offices of political parties, with the power to monitor and censor any "inaccuracy of reporting that deals directly with the affairs of UNTAC," and the decision made in September 1992 to take over Cambodia's central bank (UNTAC's financial advisor, Roger Lawrence, not only took charge of the National Bank of Cambodia but also represented the country at the annual World Bank/IMF yearly meeting) represent more symptoms of the strengthening of the UN's powers of enforcement under Boutros-Ghali.

It is true, of course, that all these powers were legally sanctioned by the four parties attending the Paris Peace Conference in October 1991, and

therefore represent a Cambodian initiative, not a unilateral decision made by the United Nations. What is equally true, though, is that there is really no way to gauge, because of the lack of elections, how much these groups can be said to "represent" the will of the Cambodian people. These peace accords were drawn up by national and international elites, and were never put to popular referendum.

In a TV interview with newscaster Chikushi Tetsuya on February 18, Boutros-Ghali was asked if these new moves on the UN's part (specifically in reference to the organization's stronger role in Somalia) didn't carry the danger of neocolonialism. Boutros-Ghali did not evade the question, but answered simply that "If it was intervention of one country, you can talk about neocolonialism, but if it was intervention by the international community, it is difficult to talk about neocolonialism."

#### **Forever in Cambodia?**

The very name of UNTAC, (specifically, the "transitional") is now in very clear danger of being violated. The signs were very clear that UNTAC was planning to stay in Cambodia past the elections scheduled for May (although even that date is now in doubt).

The UN's special representative in Cambodia (and according to the Paris Peace Conference the virtual ruler of the country) Akashi, started hinting early on that he wanted to stay past the May deadline imposed by the Security Council. In an October 23, 1992 interview with the *Phnom Penh Post* he made a subtle but clear statement of his intention, "...three months after the elections, the UN mandate terminates... But I can detect a very strong prevailing sense from Cambodians that they are anxious to have some kind of a UN presence, so that whatever possible left by UNTAC will not come to naught. I'm sure the Security Council will take heed of such a desire and there will be some UN presence, whose character and scope are yet to be determined."

Boutros-Ghali himself took advantage of his trip to Japan to push for a longer UN stay, perhaps with the awareness that Japan is one of the countries that have a real interest in Cambodia. In the February 18 interview with Chikushi, he likened the country to a patient, and said that it would be irresponsible for the doctor to let the patient go until he or she was completely cured. ■

# The Problem with the “Comfort Women Problem”

By Kano Mikiyo

*This article is an abridged translation from the Japanese magazine Impaction, Issue 78 (1993).*

**Note:**

*The word “ianfu,” which roughly translates as “comfort women,” itself has been criticized for not adequately expressing the real situation. “Wartime sexual slavery” might be a more accurate term.*

Will this be the day the mountains move? Two years ago, when I was listening to Yun Jyeogn Ok, former president of the Korean Council for Women Drafted for Sexual Slavery by Japan, I didn't think the issue of *ianfu* would become the hot issue it's become now. I thought that too much time has passed for it to really grab peoples' attention. But the issue has taken a sudden turn. It seems the mountain is beginning to budge at last.

The issue has drawn a lot of “why's” from Japanese society. The most common is, “Why has it surfaced now?” Unfortunately, though, this question usually means that the person asking the question isn't really considering the issue. They are thinking that “Many Japanese also had bitter experiences during World War II. It was a necessary evil.” Or they complain, saying, “I'm ashamed of what those women did. They wanted money so badly they disgraced themselves in public...”

Other “why's” can be asked from different angles. “Why were so many Korean women forced into prostitution?” Or “Why wasn't it an issue until recently?” It is the opposite question of “Why has

it surfaced now?” The issue was already being pushed by Senda Kako and Kim Il Myeon in the early 70's, but they looked at the issue from the point of view of racism or Japanese war responsibility, and so it never emerged as a major issue.

Ehara Yumiko wrote the following: “First, I would like to say that the *ianfu* issue encompasses war, racial issues and discrimination against women.” The reason it hasn't become a major issue up until now is that the question of discrimination against women hasn't been recognized.” (“On *Ianfu*”, *Shiso no Kagaku*, December 1992.

I agree. For twenty years feminists have been building an awareness of discrimination against women. It is only when this awareness began to overlap with the questions of war and racism that the issue finally became tangible.

The first important question raised by feminists was, “Why did the Japanese military make so many Korean women into forced prostitutes?” On this point, answers have already emerged. Some have said, “to prevent rapes by Japanese soldiers,” while others stressed, “to check the spread of venereal disease.”

We need to look more deeply into this “why” however. Kagami Mitsuyuki, in an article entitled “The Nanjing Massacre and the Japanese Terno's Visit to China” (*Impaction*, Issue 77), presented the problem in the following way: “The facts are unquestionable. What's important is to stress the sickness of the soldiers' consciousness.” He continued, “The army was made into a killing machine through a usurpation of the human will.”

This is a new “why.” Kagami added that massacre and rape occurred when the victims had thrown away their will to live to the soldiers, who

became killing machines by usurping that human will. In other words, if the victims hadn't given up their will to resist it wouldn't have happened.

I sympathize with this "why," but I'm afraid this takes the responsibility away from the soldiers for what they did to the victims. Rape victims are often asked, "Why didn't you resist more desperately," which turns into another injury and forces them into silence.

Hikosaka Tei, who continued exploring this idea of how a military was built on the usurpation of human will, said in a recent book that the problems of rape during wartime and forced prostitution involved the military system, but involved men's sexuality as well (*Dansei Shinwa*, Komichi Shobo, 1991).

For soldiers, who were deprived of their independence and forced to become objects, to have sex with a woman was a chance to have fantasies at least temporarily regaining their autonomy. In those moments they could almost lose the feeling of being an object/soldier and become a dominant, independent, free person who could enjoy pleasure. From his point of view, this became necessarily entwined with the angle of feminism.

If one merely questions the inhumanity of the military, one can easily conclude that the soldiers should be pitied as much as the forced prostitutes. The only evils in this way of thinking become "war" and the "military."

Within the movement of Korean-resident women this issue also came up. They questioned not only the problem of war but also the entire system of Japanese colonial domination and the public prostitute system.

Yamashita Yeonge wrote about the introduction of the public prostitute system after the Japanese annexation of Korea, and emphasized that the main reason for this was the control of venereal disease. She added that "The idea between the *ianfu* system was an extension of this policy." ("The Public Prostitution System in Korea" from *Korean Women on the Ianfu Issue*, Sanichi Shobo, August 1992).

Song Yeong Ok also took public prostitution as the starting point for confronting the issue of forced prostitution in colonial Korea. In the poverty brought by colonial domination, many Korean women had no choice but to become prostitutes. In addition, there was discrimination against the Korean prostitutes, and they received lower wages

than their Japanese counterparts and there was a strict limitation of age. This discrimination, both sexual and racial, was transferred from the public prostitute system to the forced prostitution. ("Race and Sex for the Ianfu," *Shiso to Gendai*, No. 31, September 1992).

### Why only now?

The issue of forced prostitution isn't confined to just the war. It also involves the question of why the disgusting facts were ignored for the ensuing nearly 50 years. This question demands that we put the whole Japanese postwar as well as present-day Japan into perspective.

An answer to this question can be found in Ehara Yumiko's article or in Pak Hwami's article "Understanding the Ianfu Issue Through Dual Gender Roles," also in *Korean Women on the Ianfu Issue*. Pak's point is that the neglect of the issue stems from double sexual standard within patriarchy where social authority gives men sexual freedom but demands that women be virtuous. This duality divides women into two categories, the ordinary woman and the prostitute, and stimulates hostility between them. Furthermore, this structure forced former forced prostitutes into silence. Solving the problem of forced prostitution implies simultaneously dissolving the dual gender role.

Seen from this point of view, the issue of forced prostitution is an issue for Japanese feminism. Despite the fact that most of the victims were Koreans, it needs to be addressed by Japanese feminists. After reading more than 20 books written by former Japanese soldiers, and dating from 1951 to as recently as August, 1991, I've come to this conclusion. Most of the authors were extremely nonchalant in their recounting stories of rapes or of forced prostitution.

"In order to meet the sexual desires of the lower-ranked officers, there were cheaper comfort houses where most girls were Taiwanese or Filipinas, but we were afraid of getting venereal disease. For the high-ranked officers, they imported Japanese beauties with names ending in *-yakko* or *-ryu* [note: names traditionally given to *geisha*], but they were all patronized by the generals or commanders. How could we, the lower-ranked officers fulfil our demands?" (Sato Kyodai, *The Southern Flying Corps*, Fuji Shobo, 1953).

"We were told that a new comfort house had

been set up 12 kilometers away, and that there were seven *Yamato nadeshiko*, or "obedient (or ideal) Japanese girls" there. Each corps was assigned a day to visit. When the day for our surgical corps came, 35 applicant soldiers and I packed two lunches each and departed... There were seven huts with straw mats instead of doors. We ate lunch, and then the soldiers lined up by platoon in front of the drapes. It took an average of five minutes per soldier. It looked as if we were waiting in line for a public toilet, but all the soldiers were satisfied when they returned to base. (Okamura Toshihiko, *The Hotabi*, Bunkensha, 1961).

Okamura was an army surgeon in a medical corps assigned to the 101st Division. *Shukan Asahi*, a weekly magazine, commented on the book, saying, "The author calmly recounted a number of battles involving the 101st Division from the point of view of a doctor, but more interesting about the book is a collection of valuable color photographs taking up 32 pages of the book." This "valuable collection" also contains a photo of the *Totsugeki Ichiban* (a condom brand-name which means "attack number one!").

A large number of rapes in China are also recorded in the books *Kenpei* (Military Police) by Miyazaki Kiyotaka (Suzakusha, 1959), and *Akuhei* (Evil Soldier) on the Japan-China War Front by Morikane Chiaki (Sobunsha, 1978). In *Akuhei*, particularly, the author recounted several rapes committed by Mimura Masaharu, a first-class private belonging to the medical corps of the 39th Division.

One day Mimura, the first-class private, "found a housewife who didn't seem yet 30" during an assault on a village. He told her, "Pee kan kan!" ("Expose yourself!") and took her pants off. He "looked into her vagina, parting the pubic hair, and didn't see any venereal disease. As soon as he had locked the bedroom door, he quickly lay her down on the bed, pulling his trousers down to his knees. The intercourse was quickly over."

On New Year's Day, 1944, Mimura and his colleagues assailed a farmhouse and stole a bull, some chickens and a 24-year-old housewife and took them back to the barracks. They "confined her in a bathhouse, and took turns raping her."

First class private Mimura Masaharu is not an assumed name. His photo and home province appear in the book. And according to the author, he was a "liberal humanist, faithful to himself, and he

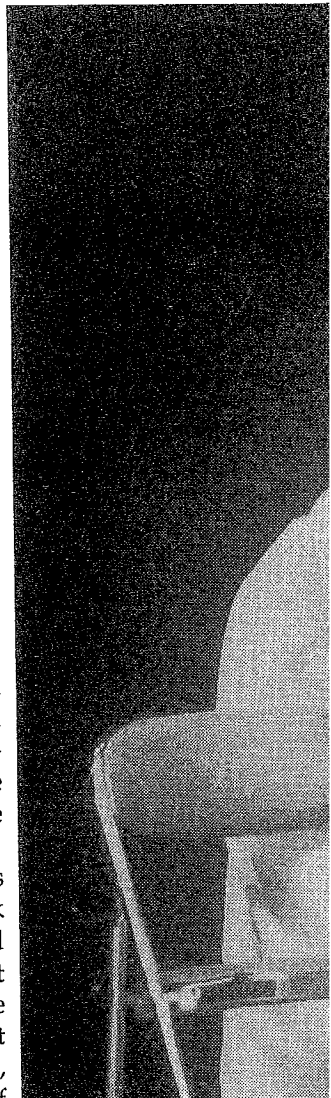
struggled bravely against the irrationality and contradictions in the severe military hierarchy." But I have merely quoted a small part of the story. And the books I read are just a small part of the tremendous war-story literature.

It has been said that one reason the issue of forced prostitution didn't emerge for such a long time was the lack of information caused by the shame of the disgraced victims and the fear of the assailants of having their past crimes exposed. It was said that there was no written material on the issue. But this was not true. While the victims certainly kept silent until recently, the assailants had been publishing their experiences since soon after the war. Why then didn't the issue emerge?

Before answering this question I would like to think of why people wrote and published these books? It may be an easy question: the experiences were not "shameful" to men. It seems, rather, that the memories of having sex with *kugnyang* (Chinese women) or "Burmese women" were bright "exotic experiences." This feeling prevailed even among the "intellectuals" like the editors, publishers, and preface-writers (the famous Mishima Yukio wrote the preface for *Kenpei*).

But what about the women who happened to get their hands on these books? Most of the readers were certainly men who'd experienced the war, but their wives and daughters must have been interested in these accounts. How did the wives feel when they read of their husbands going to "comfort houses" and buying prostitutes?

Perhaps they thought that "It happened in the past, during the 'crazy days' of war, and men's





*An emotional moment at the International Forum on War Reparations — Photo by Shibasaki Haruko*

sexual desire is natural... After all, they didn't sleep with a respectable Japanese woman, but merely with a foreign prostitute..." So the facts were revealed a long time ago, but this attitude let the issue lay in silence in Japan until the Korean victims broke their silence.

But this silence was not limited to the issue of forced prostitution. Starting in the late 1960s groups of men have been going to other Asian countries on sex tours to purchase "women." The wives see their husbands off, saying, "Good bye! Be careful about AIDS!"

In these words it's easy to see the distinction between "ordinary women" and "prostitutes." The

silence of the wives led to the internationalization of the double sexual standard, and this silence is the opposite of that of the Koreans. This is precisely the issue confronting Japanese feminism.

In Korea, where the double sexual standard is even stronger, Yun Jyeong Ok has been working hard with former forced prostitutes who are still ashamed of themselves, and she finally allowed their mouths to speak. Japanese feminism has not yet been able to open the mouths of the women who allow their husbands to buy prostitutes. Thus the issue of the *ianfu* thrusts a new question to Japanese feminism. ■

# Reprocessing Blues

## The Great Plutonium Debacle

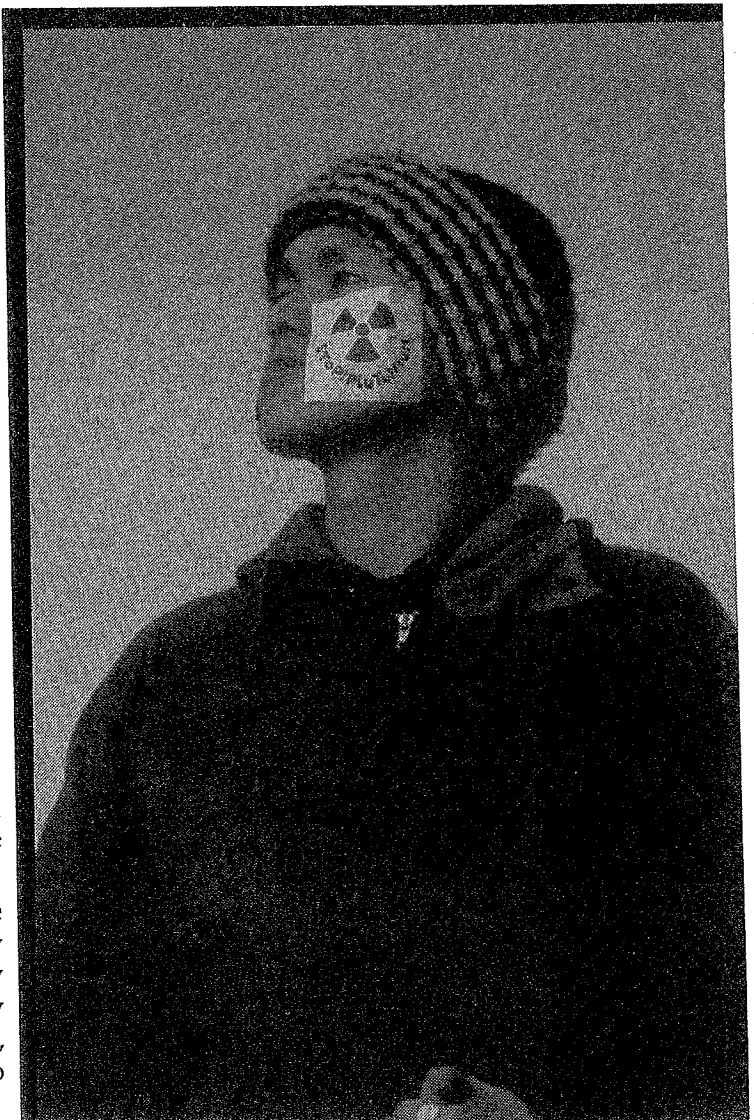
By Jens Wilkinson

**T**he Japanese government, alone among the industrialized countries, is pushing a nuclear fuel cycle program. After the United States, Britain and France have all given up their plans, Japan is pushing onwards on a massive technology drive to develop a plutonium-burning fast breeder reactor.

Of the three main links in this process, the "Monju" reactor in Fukui Prefecture, the planned reprocessing plant (to manufacture plutonium) in Rokkasho-mura, Aomori Prefecture, and the transport of plutonium from Europe, the last has received a great deal of attention. With the Akatsuki Maru docked in Sendai, however, the focus is bound to shift to the other two links. The major problems concerning the plutonium program are:

### *Structural Issues*

- (1) The motivation: The Japanese government says its program is for purely "peaceful" purposes, but at the same time it is "deploring" the construction of similar facilities by north Korea.
- (2) The problem of proliferation: Because the Monju reactor has been repeatedly delayed, and there are fears that it may eventually be abandoned, Japan may find itself with a surplus of plutonium, which could eventually find its way into nuclear weapons.
- (3) The industrial structure: The fast breeder reactor, like the fusion reactor, is



*Photo courtesy of Greenpeace*

a huge facility that requires huge capital concentration.

(4) The secrecy: The Japanese government has been extremely secretive about the progress of the project, and in particular about the transportation.

### *Safety Issues*

(5) The problem of cooling: The Mihama No. 3 reactor came close to meltdown in February 1991 when a cooling pipe ruptured. If a pipe were ever to break in Monju, which uses sodium as a coolant, the sodium would come in contact with water, causing a colossal explosion and spreading plutonium into the air.

(6) The danger of a runaway reaction: Plutonium is less stable than uranium, increasing the likelihood of a Chernobyl-like accident. It is reported that the French Super Phenix project was abandoned because of power fluctuations that may have been an omen of this danger.

(7) Dangers involved in transportation: By ship, land or sea, transportation of plutonium is extremely dangerous. It is an extremely toxic substance, and with a half-life of 24,000 years is for all intents and purposes eternally so.

(8) The problem of storage. Again, if the project doesn't materialize, someone will have to watch over the remaining tons for thousands of years.

### **Japan's Plutonium Program**

An article in the *New York Times* on December 20, 1992 (just as the Akatsuki Maru was sailing for Japan) bore the succinct title "Japan's Nuclear Fiasco" and began with the equally incisive, "The breeder reactor was to be another temple to industrial planning. Not likely."

The program, however, is still going forward. It was recently reported that the Japanese government granted permission to Japan Nuclear Fuel Ltd. to build a reprocessing plant at Rokkashomura, part of a "nuclear peninsula" at the tip of Aomori Prefecture in order to provide fuel for the Monju fast breeder reactor." The situation, however, is almost absurd. Monju is behind schedule, and yet the government is pushing forward two projects, the plutonium transportation and the reprocessing plant, which will both accumulate plutonium. And at the same time Tokyo is putting pressure on north Korea to halt its own reprocessing project. Japan's professed enthusiasm for the "peaceful use" of plutonium is, for many people,

seeming ever less sincere.

The output of the reprocessing plant itself will be the equivalent of several hundred power plants, and if Monju never goes on-line or is abandoned this pile of plutonium will be left for centuries, with no possible use by nuclear weapons.

On March 13, several groups in Aomori Prefecture held protest action against the plant, and nearly 2,000 people, mostly local but also from around the country, gathered to demand a stop to the program.

### **The Akatsuki Maru Arrives**

The arrival of the plutonium-laden Akatsuki Maru in Sendai was of course the major nuclear event of the past few months. The whole affair was a major setback for the Japanese government's nuclear policy. Very rarely in history has the voyage of one ship attracted so much attention. We might exaggerate and call it "the ship that launched a thousand demonstrations"!

Stories in major papers around the world emphasized again and again that Japan is the only nation in the world still pushing a plutonium program. Governments all around the world protested and asked that the ship not pass through their waters. The U.S. denied them the use of the Panama Canal, and finally the government had no choice but to send the ship on a sinewy route, a 32,000-kilometer path around the Cape of Good Hope, Australia, and through the Pacific islands.

No sooner was ship safely docked that the government sent out a thank-you note to the countries that had held their breaths as it has passed through their waters. The letter expressed the Japanese government's "gratitude and appreciation... for the understanding that your government has accorded to this important task." The only problem was that there hadn't been any "understanding." It leaves one to wonder what they were being thanked for. The letter went on to say, in a more sinister tone, that "This success augurs well for the future development in the use of this substance [plutonium] by mankind." (*Nuke Info Tokyo*, #33)

But the Akatsuki Maru, for all the press it received, is only one part of the nuclearization of the Japanese peninsula and of Asia in general.

### **"Experts" Conference in Tokyo**

The Fourth International Conference on Nuclear Cooperation in Asia, an assembly of "experts" in

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the field, was held in Tokyo on March 2nd. A group of demonstrators gathered outside and pampered the participants as they arrived for the meeting. Many (though not all) of the Japanese officials, some of whom arrived in black chauffeured cars, huffily passed through the line of protesters without accepting any of the literature.

This series of conferences aims to create a "nuclear network" throughout Asia, and to share experiences in "public acceptance," the policy-maker buzzword for pro-nuke propaganda. In a typical big-brotherly way, the basic stance of the various participating governments (Japan, China,

south Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, the Philippines) is that the problem is not nuclear power, but rather the "unease" that many people feel towards it. The documents from the conferences, like the one issued by the Japanese Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) following the second conference in 1991, abound with phrases such as "incorrect information" as well as with strategic plans on how to make people less "uneasy."

In order to create a counter to these policies, groups from around Asia will be gathering in late June to early July to create their own solidarity. ■

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## Announcement of a Conference NO-NUKES ASIA FORUM

June 26-July 4, Japan

Recently the Japanese government carried out a plutonium transport, which had the potential of bringing fatal nuclear disaster to people en route or even to all mankind. Japan has not abandoned its plans to operate Monju, a fast breeder reactor which no other nation is still pursuing. As a result, huge amounts of plutonium will accumulate. There are already suspicions that Japan may be armed with nuclear weapons.

For a long time, Japanese militarism victimized other countries in the Asian region, and this invasion may be repeated with the overseas dispatch of the Self-defense Forces in UN Peace-Keeping Operations. Furthermore, Japan continues to promote economic control and oppression under the pretext of "assistance." Our concern for the nuclear situation in Asia is enhanced by this stand.

Currently, nuclear facilities are being built in Asia a higher pace than in other regions of the world. Japan, as a leading nation (according to a *White Paper on Nuclear Power* published by the government), is involved in the planning of the commercial use of nuclear power in Asian countries, and especially south Korea, Taiwan and Indonesia. Residents from areas near power plants or from planned sites of nuclear power plants have been invited to Japan by the utility companies here in order to expose them to "public acceptance." Engineers from the Asian region have also come to be "trained" in Japan. These public tactics strongly suggest that the Japanese nuclear industry intends to hold onto leadership in the Asian nuclear market as industrialization leads to increased demand for electric power.

Last year, an anti-nuclear activist from south Korea called for the immediate organization of an Asian forum on nuclear issues. This call led us to take action.

We are pleased to announce a meeting of the No-Nukes Asia Forum, in Japan, from June 26-July 4, 1993.

### Organizing Committee for No-Nukes Asia Forum

*Chairpersons:* Maeno Ryo  
Miyajima Nobuo  
Ogiso Shigeko

### WE ARE EXPECTING...

*to discuss and exchange information on:*

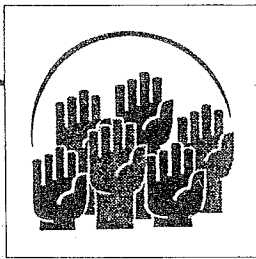
- How Japanese nuclear policy (the plutonium issue and nuclear plant exports) works in the present situation of Asia;
- How nuclear establishments cooperate in Asia (e.g. the propaganda that Japanese nuclear power plants are safe);
- What impact nuclear power plants have on our lifestyles and on the economies of Asian communities; and
- To establish an anti-nuclear network among the people of Asia.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Write to:** Organizing Committee for No-Nukes Asia Forum  
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PEOPLE'S PLAN  
for the 21st Century

# Making the People Visible

*By Inoue Reiko*

A thousand people are gathered in front of Bangkok's Democracy Monument, the monument which stood and watched, in May 1992, as the Thai people rose up for democracy and as the military gunned people down in the streets. Among the participants are tribal people from northern Thailand, peasants from Isaan, young women workers still in their factory uniforms, who have come straight from work, Burmese students in exile, struggling against military rule in their own country, slum dwellers, and many other Thai people, as well as more than 300 foreign participants from 46 countries, not only from Asia but from Nicaragua, Honduras, and Brazil.

It is the final day the People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21) - Thailand 1992's main forum, held under the theme of "Participatory Democracy at Community, National and International Levels: Making the People Visible, More Power to the People."

The Rajchadamnoen Pledge, a voice from the peoples of Thailand and of the Asia-Pacific region, has been promulgated, on December 10, 1992.

This gathering was the finale of the second gathering of PP21. The first, which was held in 1989 in Japan, brought forth the Minamata Declaration, which proposed the principle of transborder participatory democracy, stating "We declare that this right means the right of the people to cross all borders, national or social, to carry their struggle to the exact sources of power seeking to dominate or destroy them." On the basis of this declaration, Asian regional NGOs and veterans of PP21 in 1989 agreed to make this gathering a first step in the process of building an alliance of hope for the 21st century.

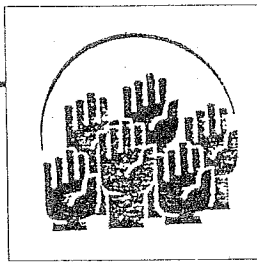
PP21 Thailand was launched with a workshop on sustaining democracy and development, and was then followed by a series of sectoral and thematic workshops. Thirteen ethnic groups in Thailand gathered for the first time and declared

their right to participate in the national decision-making process. Peasants in Isaan, northeastern Thailand, accepted as their guests other peasants from around Asia, exchanged experiences, and discussed alternatives and strategies to counter GATT. One thousand Thai workers joined with the representatives from other worker's movements to demonstrate in Bangkok and to discuss the situation of workers and a joint program for the region. Thai women held a national meeting on women's participation in decision-making processes. An international women's conference organized by Thai women's organizations and War Resisters International focused on "women overcoming violence." Women also held a workshop to discuss the trafficking of women. Youth and students formed their own visions while taking actions for solidarity with the Burmese students who are facing police harassment in Thailand in addition to the troubles they face at home.

The discussions and decisions of all the different workshops were tied together in the Main Forum, which focused on the process of building alliances between the genders, between South and North, between sectors.

The Main Forum was full of the spirit of the Thai grassroots movements which has been gaining strength in their struggle for democracy which started with the military coup of February 1991, reached its peak in the bloody events of May 1992 (200 persons remain missing) and culminated in the national elections of September, 1992.

Thus, PP21 found its roots in the reality of Thai grassroots people, and the international and national processes were linked to each other; through this process Thai people were made more visible and empowered, not only within their own borders but on the international scene as well, while NGOs and peoples movements from abroad were encouraged by their strength. ■



# Combining Heads and Hearts

*Excerpts from an Interview with  
Surichai Wan'Gaeo*

*Surichai Wan'Gaeo is a member of the International Steering Committee of PP21 Thailand. This interview was conducted just after the conclusion of the Main Forum in December 1992.*

After the end of the PP21 programs in Thailand, I felt a strong sense of togetherness as well as accomplishment. Two years before we had decided to hold the programs in Thailand, but after the coup d'etat of February 1991 we started to wonder whether we could really do it. In fact, starting at the end of 1991 we found ourselves caught up in the democratization movement during the period of transition of power away from the military, and could not carry out any preparation for PP21.

During those difficult days the contributions of overseas people meant a lot to us. The whole year of 1992 was full of events: the revision of the Constitution, the elections, and so on, and we were only a small organization. We couldn't predict what would happen. However, we had a wide network, and this network was strengthened through the democratization movement.

There were many uncertainties. Some felt at first that we couldn't organize a conference on hill tribes because in Thailand it's been traditionally considered to be too specific, that their problems didn't constitute "social problems." In the preparatory meetings, however, we concluded that it wasn't right to just throw away complex issues such as citizenship, farming, migrant work (many of the tribal people come to work in the cities, and so on as simply "political problems." We felt certain by June that we would be able to hold a conference

on this issue.

At the global level, things are getting crazy. The realm of politics is being settled by economic measures, and human values seem confused. Because of this, people have started to talk of their own movements, practices and individual and community sufferings, and have gained new power from them. If we take the example of hill tribes, they came and heard the experiences of similar peoples in India. They could understand, even when meeting people whose lands they'd never visited, that they shared a similar situation. Ainu people, and people from Nicaragua and Malaysia raised common issues. Through the process people shared their suffering.

This is not a matter of ideology. It is a matter of feeling, and of ways of thinking. Our heads and hearts can combine, and we can draw new ideas from this combination. Forty percent of the participants were workers, farmers, and villagers. There were many hill tribe people. We really wanted to hear from these people. I think they spoke well in the group discussions, even though there is a big gap between their place in the mountains and the city of Bangkok. Ordinary people may think that the 21st century will be handled by highly-educated people. But the hill tribes also want to think of their own future, or of what to do with their children, with their culture. If people don't understand this, our future will remain dark.

Half of the participants were women. I found myself in a meeting surrounded by women, and they were never there as decorations. I am sure that something has started inside me as well. The point to consider is what kind of politics PP21 can create.

In the past, many of our movements simply attempted to put pressure on politicians and governments or to push policy proposals. They were in some ways effective. But increasingly farmers discovered that the market economy was too strong and was destroying the very basis of their lives. The idea of composite farming came out of this, and organic farming also drew much attention at PP21. Farmers started to collect information on agricultural chemicals and to try other things. Through these activities the farmers' network has become strengthened since PP21 Japan three years ago. Farmers at the grassroots have started to exchange ideas and experiences among themselves. This is very different from activity at the parliamentary or governmental level.

New things and new ideas are being born now throughout the world. A new thinking to go beyond market principles is not a dream. In fact we are facing a paradigm shift. I don't know how far intellectuals can see this. A hill tribe person (Karen) told me this: asking for cooperation is more costly than buying something. Nowadays, most things can be bought, and this is convenient. Money can sometimes even buy time. But what the tribe per-

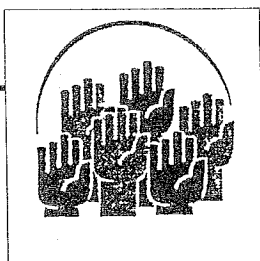
son meant to say is that cooperation has more value. This is a good way of looking at things. I am sure we will be able to find this kind of human relations in many places.

We feel certain now that we will be able to create a new level of movements based on our experiences at PP21, where we sat together and talked not only of our own lives but also of our production activities and our experiences. We were able to create our own territory or space, a space totally different from that of a state. In other words, the idea of autonomy and self-reliance has become clear. It includes the idea of self-sufficiency, but is much broader than simply that. What was born was a new concept of communality and a new sense of the "public." Through small networks and exchanges we have gained confidence. We have come to believe what we can and must do. We have begun to listen to others and to try by ourselves. We have met other people and thus expanded our world. And this confidence we have gained is not a naive confidence in ourselves, but a confidence in what we did and in the fact that we joined hands. ■

*The full documents from PP21 Thailand can be obtained from P.O. Box 26, Bungthonglang, Bangkok 10242, Thailand. In addition, the full texts were printed in volume 86 of Asian Action, the newsletter of the Asian Cultural Forum on Development.*



*The PP21 Thailand Grande Finale, before Democracy Monument in Bangkok, December 10, 1992*



# The Rajchadamnoen Pledge

## Preamble

**W**e, over 500 Thai and foreign participants of the People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21) meeting in Bangkok between December 6-10, 1992, represent people's movements and networks, national, regional and international NGOs and solidarity groups from 46 countries from all regions and continents. We have come together to reiterate and renew our commitment to build transborder alliances of peoples in struggle, solidarity and hope. We gather in the spirit that we pledged ourselves to in the Minamata Declaration (1989) which marked the birth of PP21.

Since Minamata people-to-people alliances and process at the local, national, regional and cross-continental levels have been realized across boundaries and cultures. Significant milestones in this process have been the forging of relations with the indigenous, black and peoples resistance movements in the Americas and the establishment of a group in Central America.

We have met as women, as workers, as peasants, as youth and students, as indigenous peoples, as urban poor, and as activists and advocates of peace and human rights, participatory democracy, ecologically-sound grassroots development, alternative cultures and struggle against destructive tourism-related (or resort) development. The encounters and experiences, the ideas and action plans that emerged from these sectoral and multi-sectoral activities held in various parts of Thailand culminated in the Main Forum in Bangkok where we shared our experiences of life and struggles in various forms — through poems, songs, dances, dramas, and visual exhibits.

## PP21: From Minamata to Bangkok: Renewing the Alliance of Hope

PP21 is taking place in Thailand in the midst of momentous global and national changes, which challenge the very basis of our existence.

The Soviet Union has collapsed. The international capitalist system has become more dominant. There is unprecedented global concentration of power

with the United States and its allies in the Group of 7 exercising virtual monopoly of control over political institutions, economic resources, military power, information and technological products and processes. Institutions like the IMF, the World Bank, GATT, and the Asian Development Bank work together to enforce the dominance of multinational corporations in the name of the free market, totally irresponsible to the basic needs and survival of the marginalized in society. The United Nations, particularly the Security Council, has become a tool of U.S. foreign policy as demonstrated in the Gulf War and in subsequent events.

Integral to this system of global domination is a whole pattern of national control and domination expressing itself in different facets of life. Most governments in the region are armed to the teeth with wide-ranging powers that are stifling the growth of civil society. Democracy has become a system of symbols and rituals shorn of substance. The fundamental civil and political rights of our people continue to be denied. This denial of rights is perhaps most blatant in societies under military rule, but is equally, if not more, destructive in societies where authoritarianism parades with a human mask.

There is mass poverty and blatant exploitation of labor and of the environment. Marginalization of women continues unabated, and violence against them is on the increase. Elites in many countries in Asia-Pacific emphasize the perpetuation of power and the pursuit of profits at the expense of the basic needs and fundamental rights of the people. The fatal grip of international capital and export-oriented industrialization on our countries, which has been propped up as "economic miracles" (NICs), in itself brings further misery and destitution to the poor.

But we have no reason to despair. We know that unjust structures whether at community, national or international levels must crumble and collapse. They cannot last. Our confidence is not born of naivete. Our faith in the just future of humanity is not the product of some utopian dream. In the last three years since

Minamata, we have seen our struggles grow and develop.

Seven months ago, unarmed people waged a battle against guns and tanks to establish democracy. The people in this country became visible on the streets of the city and in the towns in the countryside. As they challenged state power the people once again demonstrated the power of non-violent popular struggle. Through blood and tears they displayed their moral courage and their commitment to the cause of participatory democracy. In the process they reasserted their inherent dignity and recovered the power that is their own.

While this was perhaps the most dramatic portrayal of people's power in the region since Minamata we have experienced ongoing struggles of women against violence and domination; indigenous peoples for their survival and to preserve their cultural and ethnic identity and harmonious relations between nature and humanity; peasants for their land; workers for more just and human working conditions; the urban poor for the right to shelter; the youth and students for a just and democratic society; entire local and indigenous communities against mass and luxury tourism; and people against the unsustainable development paradigm and programs.

Furthermore democratic struggles have been successfully waged in 1990 in Bangladesh and Nepal against authoritarianism and military rule. The ongoing protracted struggle of the Burmese people against the military junta cries out for justice and international support. In the Philippines, the rejection of the RP-US Military Bases Treaty on September 16, 1991 has removed a major threat to peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

Each of these is a witness to the awakening of people's consciousness; a stir in our hearts in response to the injustices and the inequities of the existing order. Each struggle demonstrates the ability of people to determine their own destiny. This is proof of our confidence in our capacity to alter the course of history, which in turn strengthens that confidence.

The significance of these struggles within the Asia-Pacific reality is that they emphasize a profound commitment to life. It is a commitment that has great meaning since Asia is the continent that has given birth to the world's major spiritual and moral traditions. At the same time these struggles also point out the relevance and significance of the traditions, cultures and values of the indigenous peoples of the Asia-Pacific region. Central to these traditions is a vision of life and living inspired by justice, love and compassion. Harnessing what is essential in them demands re-interpretation of the traditions. It is this re-interpretation which has a resonance in the struggles of the poor and the oppressed to reassert their humanity.

Reasserting our humanity means destroying those unjust structures at family, community, national and international levels which de-humanize us and hold us in bondage to wealth and power. This demands a concerted effort on our part to create participatory democracy and foster genuine development. It demands strengthening of grassroots initiatives and networks, building alliances of people's organizations. It demands transborder linkages at the regional and international levels in support of people's struggles to create an ecologically sustainable, equitable and gender-just society.

### **Alliance Building**

Alliance building is oriented towards the long-term goals of PP21 - Alliance of Hope, namely, global people's power which will confront and prevail over the powers of this unjust and unequal world. Building such power requires us to work towards the forging of alliances of people's movements at the grassroots, local, national, regional and global levels.

This alliance is based on people-to-people contacts rooted in a culture of friendship and partnership that transcends borders and sectoral and organizational concerns. This demands of us an attitude to learn from each others' struggles and strengthen the relationships and alliances already underway in our own societies. We are challenged to be open to other cultures and experiences in our efforts to link not just ideas but persons; to support and contribute rather than merely expect support; to give meaning to language and communication between peoples; and to be open to initiatives and alternatives coming from all levels.

PP21 is based on the initiatives and participation of peoples and their organizations. This is the essence of our alliance-building wherein we encourage and endorse the concrete agenda on which people's actions are based.

We as participants of PP21 Thailand endorse the proposals and action plans adopted by the participants in the various sectoral and thematic forums that preceded the Main Forum, as an integral part of PP21 Thailand 1992. At the same time, we have adopted for ourselves the following:

### **Information Exchange and Dissemination**

We need to know more about the things happening to and around us. We must keep abreast of the fast-changing realities, trends and tendencies in all their dimensions, for many reasons. For one, information is increasingly being denied to us, and there is a deliberate tendency to block our access to information. For another, there are dominating processes at work in our localities, societies and regions which can only be fought against in a transborder manner. Furthermore, we need to learn from and build on each other's knowledge, experiences and struggles.

All these bring us closer together and point the way towards concerted collaborative action to mutually reinforce our respective struggles.

Information dissemination is not to be seen merely as a process of mechanical transfer, given the complexity of issues that have direct and far-reaching impact on the lives of the people. Ideas emerge from people and we need to be conscious not to impose our own ideas on them. Moreover, we also need to ensure that the ideas and analysis do not remain trapped in academic language. Proper communication strategies need to be implemented so that concerned sectors can utilize their own information base as well as obtain such analysis and information in easy people-oriented language for purposes of action.

During the Main Forum participants expressed the need for information exchange and dissemination on a wide and diverse range of issues. These include, among others:

- the impact of bio-technology on agriculture, cash crops, drugs and pharmaceuticals, and the implications for the vast majorities of people in the region;
- an inventory of NGOs in the region, and their respective skills, resources and areas of concern;
- the sex trade and industry;
- aid, trade, debt and structural adjustment;
- environmental issues directly related to development and sustainability.

#### **Lobbying, Advocacy and Solidarity Action**

The demand for accountability of multinational corporations and governments to serve the needs and promote the fundamental rights of people was also constantly expressed. Among the issues that need solidarity action are: the demand for the right of free association, protection and promotion of human rights, the right to self-determination.

#### **South-South, South-North Alliance Building**

We need to build transborder sectoral and inter-sectoral alliances from the village to the international levels. Already some processes and initiatives are underway. One such exchange involves fisherfolk in southern Thailand and northern Malaysia. Another ongoing transborder initiative is being undertaken by a task force for the survival of Asian agriculture, farmers and peasants. Participants from among the students and youth have pledged to link up with farmers and indigenous peoples. Trading links on equitable terms have been forged and are being further developed between consumers in the North (e.g. Japan) and producers in the South (e.g. sugar workers in Negros, Philippines).

At the Main Forum we learned of many transborder actions and events being organized by

groups from different countries, which cover various themes and concerns. Among these initiatives that repeatedly found mention are:

- Strengthening mutual support networks for shelter, rescue, legal assistance, counseling, reintegration, etc., for women, particularly Thai women, who fall victim to the international flesh trade (in Japan, etc.) as well as the trade in migrant female labor.
- Women forging alliances across gender, sectoral, cultural and national lines to strongly condemn, on 25 November 1993, the violence perpetrated against women.
- The mobilization of national and international support for the tribal and indigenous peoples, to mark 1993 as the Year of Indigenous Peoples. International Treaties and Declarations asserting the rights of indigenous people should be translated into the indigenous languages and made available in an easily understandable form.

#### **Inter-cultural Alliance Building**

We must build alliance based on liberative cultures, to respect and enrich our diversities amidst growing tendencies towards ethnic chauvinism, communalism and racism.

#### **PP21 Follow-up and Facilitation Work - Continuing Mechanisms**

We need to reinforce and strengthen the people's organizations' leading role and participation at the local, national and inter-sectoral levels, in collaboration with regional groups and alliances. On the regional level a minimum facilitating mechanism to ensure the follow-up of the PP21 process is proposed. Regional consultations must be held to decide upon the form and flow of future PP21 events. Some specific proposals include, among others:

- the preparation and dissemination of a directory of participants (including personal profiles) to the Thai PP21 events; and
- translation into local languages of the Thai PP21 materials (it has been suggested that participants themselves undertake this task).

As we pledge our commitment, we are aware that we are creating power — it is a power that is not based on relying on the powerful, but in our capacity to do things despite the existing oppressive structures; a power that is based on our determination to create and maintain our own spaces of action, in our confidence and ability to learn and to build reliable relations and alliances towards the 21st century.

— Bangkok, 10 December 1992

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# Nine Building Blocks

## *Review of the São Paulo Forum's Managua Declaration*

*The 'São Paulo Forum' has brought together more than sixty popular, democratic forces from the region to exchange experiences and evaluate the situation on the continent and beyond.*

*The Forum began in 1990 in São Paulo, Brazil, as an initiative of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT). The third Annual Meeting of the Forum took place in Managua in July 1992. One of the aims of the discussion was to begin the process of trying to achieve a consensus on national electoral platforms before the elections due to take place in the region between 1993 and 1996.*

*Below is the portion of the Declaration agreed at the meeting which deals with the principles behind a proposed alternative economic program for the area. As the participants pointed out, for an alternative economic program to be viable, it must be subscribed to and acted upon by grassroots organizations both in South America and further afield. Such a program can only be worked out by the organisations themselves in discussion and negotiation with one another.*

*We are asking our readers to contribute to this discussion either by writing to us with your comments or by taking part in person in meetings which PARC can hold on this issue. We are publishing a similar article to this in our Japanese language newsletter, Oruta Tshin, and plan to publish in AMPO correspondence on this issue, any further developments in South America and the Caribbean or elsewhere as well as points raised in any further relevant meetings.*

**T**he search for popular and revolutionary alternatives must combine the ability to promote resistance to neoliberalism with the creation of space for the exercise of popular power. We must promote and enhance the tendency towards revitalizing our people's capacity for struggle and for the creation of cultural forms which can counteract the dominant culture.

The following points, developed on the basis of the analysis developed in the workshops and seminars, were emphasized in the Forum debate, as regards Latin America and all the democratic forces in the world:

(1) The neo-liberal project for Latin America and the Caribbean is not reformable since it is a scheme that springs from the very nature of an unjust economic order and that seeks to consolidate in our societies the relations that characterize that order. Only the broad unity of all the diverse left and progressive forces in the world will be able to bring about a project whose goals are more in accord with the demands for justice and for peace.

(2) The economic base for an alternative model of integration must come from within our societies,

from a struggle aimed at overcoming the dominant models and structures and at eliminating monopoly and oligopoly control. This struggle must seek to promote autonomous economic development aimed, in the first place, at satisfying the basic necessities of the majorities. It should seek to substitute the current alliance of transnationalized sectors of the bourgeoisie with international capital for an alliance between all those forces interested in the promotion of national projects based on social justice, democracy and national liberation.

(3) We affirm that at present, any process of genuine economic development must involve a change in those social subjects in power, a just distribution of property and wealth, the exercise of power by the majority, and the strengthening of civil society. New space must be opened up, both at the level of autonomous organization of people and at the level of the state, so as to broaden the influence and participation of broad popular majorities. Social policies cannot be separated from economic policies; economic policies should be designed to address social problems. It is necessary to modify the character of the traditional productive structure,

and to struggle, in those countries where such modifications have taken place, to assure that they are maintained. In these cases, structural adjustment policies, be they orthodox or heterodox, must be subordinated to the development of the productive forces.

(4) It is necessary to engage in vigorous political activity aimed at enhancing the autonomous organization of the people as expressed in distinct structures and modalities, starting from the grassroots level. We must counter the neo-liberal strategy of trying to weaken the actions and the political influence of the popular movement.

(5) We need to develop programs whose specific goal is the full integration and equality of women in society. The social function of the maternal role must be recognized and domestic labor must be acknowledged as an activity which contributes to the generation of wealth. Programs should be developed to secure the inclusion of women in the production and appropriation of material, cultural, political, technological, and intellectual wealth of society and the elimination of the relations of social oppression.

(6) A genuinely popular alternative should also take up democratization programs that modify or substitute elected and non-elected offices and anti-democratic institutions, and that, on the basis of new constitutional frameworks, make possible the creation and development of an integral, political, social and economic democracy.

(7) A popular alternative must be sufficiently viable so that it may take on economic responsibilities currently monopolized by national and foreign business sectors. This monopolization impedes the development of initiatives which could favor the majority. A new structural and institutional framework must be provided so as to allow popular leaders and organizations to assume leadership roles in economic policy, and in this way facilitate the required transformations. For this purpose, information, transparency, public debate, and the development of participatory forms of democracy that range from the local to the national level are essential. These forms of participation will only be viable in the context of an overall project of trans-

formation whose vision is the creation of a new society.

(8) Popular participation in the design, administration, management, implementation and supervision of strategic decisions depends on the existence of a clear project for national development which brings together the diverse efforts of constituent elements. The sum of micro-economic undertakings, although they may constitute authentically autonomous and popular undertakings do not by themselves constitute a national alternative.

(9) The state must be a forum for participation and national decision making, in that it must play a central regulating role and promote social equity. Management of the economy must not be left exclusively in the hands of the so-called "magic of

the market," which is nothing more than the resolve of large-scale national and international capital and the international financial agencies.

*These forms of participation will only be viable in the context of an overall project of transformation whose vision is the creation of a new society.*

We must rejuvenate the struggles of our peoples and our original nations, breaking with ancestral subjugation, in

order to create the conditions that will allow us to construct plurinational states and societies. This is a central factor in popular development; it mandates that we not allow that the contents of education and of the communications media be imposed from abroad, nor that it exclusively reflect the interests of local minorities.

The popular movements and democratic forces must strengthen and modernize their own communications media and take on the struggle for democratization of the means of communication in general.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the foundation for autonomy of the indigenous peoples and special ethnic, social and cultural groups must be an original economic base and appropriate forms of political representation. These are indispensable elements of an overall project of democratic participation. The struggle for democracy in our continent must also include the demand for an end to colonialism in Latin America and the Caribbean and support for the right of those peoples to their self-determination and full independence. ■



# Razing the Forests

## Japan's Role in Tropical Forest Destruction

Japan's imports of tropical timber from South-east Asia have created an environmental and social disaster of staggering proportions. With only some two percent of the world's population, Japan imports 30 percent of all tropical timber, and an incredible 50 percent of all tropical hardwood logs traded internationally. In Sarawak, Malaysia, from which Japan currently imports approximately 64 percent of its tropical hardwood logs, more than 500 indigenous people have been arrested since 1987 for non-violently blockading logging roads. Such actions came as a last resort after repeated appeals for a halt to logging on their lands fell on deaf ears. Logging has undermined the very basis of their livelihood, as bulldozers have plowed through their fields and graveyards, siltation has decimated fish populations and contaminated drinking water, and chainsaws have scared wild game away. The World Bank predicts that the last exploitable primary forests of Sarawak will be logged out in nine years at the current rate of logging.

This old-growth timber, extracted from some of the most biologically diverse and fragile ecosystems in the world, is being used as a cheap, disposable commodity to fuel Japan's construction and furniture industries. Forests cover 67 percent of Japan's land area, but domestic wood accounts for only 26 percent of Japan's wood consumption.

Japan's voracious appetite for timber denuded the Philippines in the 60s, and caused massive forest destruction in Indonesia in the 70s. As these regions banned log exports, pressures shifted first to Sabah, and then to Sarawak, Malaysia. Sabah,



*Protesting at the Malaysian Embassy in Tokyo*

the second largest supplier of tropical logs to Japan in recent years, has been forced to ban log exports from January 1993 since local sawmills have been unable to secure enough wood for their own needs. As long as Japan's consumption is not curbed, the same disaster is sure to be repeated, whether in Papua New Guinea,

Indochina, or Siberia.

Sarawak Campaign Committee (SCC) has been working with citizen's groups around Japan to reduce consumption of tropical timber, and halt imports of timber from Sarawak and other regions in which logging has resulted in severe human rights violations and environmental destruction. Citizens nationwide have been lobbying their local governments; as a result, more than twenty, including Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya, have announced policies or passed resolutions calling for reduced tropical timber consumption. The construction and plywood industries have also begun to look for alternatives. Still, such changes lag far behind the pace of destruction. The next few years will determine the fate of Sarawak's last ancient forests.

For more information, write to:

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SCC publishes *Mori no Koe*, a quarterly English newsletter on Japan's impact on the world's forests. Annual subscriptions are ¥4000 (US\$30 overseas).

# Modernization vs. Militarization: Ethnic Conflict and Labour in Sri Lanka

By J. Basil Fernando

Asia Monitor Resource Center, Hong Kong, 1991

Reviewed by Santasilan Kadirgamar

Among one time British colonies Sri Lanka (Ceylon until 1972) has had the distinction of working, with some success, representative institutions from the early years of this century. Democratic and human rights, primarily civil and political rights, were won and defended since 1931, long before the country attained political independence in 1948. Universal adult franchise was granted to the people of Sri Lanka in 1931. This was a remarkable achievement when one considers the fact that women in Britain obtained the right to vote in 1918, in the U.S. in 1920, and in Japan only in 1946. The country enjoyed a fair degree of self-government from 1931, during which period was also born the anti-imperialist and socialist Lanka Sama Samaja Party (Lanka Social Equality Party) which led the masses in winning several rights including the right to organize trade unions, to strike, to hold demonstrations, to participate in mass rallies and above all the right to exercise one's vote in relatively free and fair elections. Peaceful changes of government took place in 1956, March 1960, July 1960, 1965, 1970 and 1977 until the present ruling United National Party introduced the presidential system,



devalued parliament and set in motion actions that have resulted in the erosion of democratic processes and human rights in the last fifteen years.

Three major social welfare reforms achieved in the mid-decades of this century have however been preserved in spite of several attempts made by the ruling class in response to World Bank and IMF pressure to abolish them. These are free education from kindergarten to university, free health and subsidized food to approximately 50 percent of the country's people who are poor. In this context Basil Fernando rightly quotes Prof. G.L. Peiris that "the historical origins of almost all aspects of the social welfare system which distinguished our country from other neighboring lands at a comparatively early stage of its political development, are directly attributable to the dedication and social sensitivity of the leadership of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party."

But one major problem has plagued the country from 1948. The failure to find an acceptable solution to the problems of the minorities or ethnic nationalities in the four decades since independence has placed Lanka in a perennial situation of crisis. Basil

Fernando, in this publication which is a useful addition to several books that have appeared in the last decade on the growing crisis in Sri Lanka, addresses the question of democratic and human rights primarily from the perspective of the trade union movement. In doing so he has provided readers with a much needed and fresh insight into the problems of militarization and authoritarianism in Sri Lanka. He has "attempted to show that the causes of today's catastrophe are basically internal and could have been avoided. As for remedies, they lie in restoration of the freedom of speech and organization in Sri Lanka." He adds, "I have laid special stress on the trade unions as a central issue in relation to the restoration of peace in Sri Lanka. I have treated the ethnic issue within this total context."

Though the title of the book suggests Ethnic Conflict and Labour, the book is primarily about the left movement, trade unions and the militarization and how the United National Party sought to destroy the trade union movement. "The major problem that the UNP concerned itself with, at the very inception of independence, was how to crush the powerful trade unions that had come of age during the 1930s and 40s." He rightly suggests that the main aim in weakening the parliamentary system with the creation of the executive presidency was to destroy the formidable trade union movement which had prepared the way for the defeat of the UNP in 1956 and again in 1970. It also opened the way for "bandit capitalism," the enormous expansion of the casino underworld, paramilitary and death squads. The collective responsibility that characterized the parliamentary system was transformed into collective loyalty to the president.

The author devotes one chapter to the Indian Peace-keeping Forces intervention in Lanka and the rise and fall of the JVP (People's Liberation Front). Here Basil Fernando assumes that the reader has an adequate knowledge of the causes and the nature of the continuing ethnic conflict in Lanka. In spite of the proliferation of books and articles on

this issue there is very little understanding even among human rights and Third World solidarity groups of the complex nature of the problem and the conflict that has taken more than 100,000 lives in the last decade. Some basic facts and analysis of the primary demands of the Tamil people, the position of the Muslims as a minority within a minority, and above all the unresolved problem of the Tamil plantation workers who are the oppressed among the oppressed would have placed the whole problem of ethnic conflict in relation to labor, modernization and militarization into perspective. Here Basil Fernando repeats the errors of the left movement in Lanka, the failure to give priority to the problems of nationalities and ethnic communities, including the right to self-determination.

The author is right when he asserts that "the most important agent in the politicization of the military has been the armed conflict in the north," and "how Sri Lankans deal with their now highly militarized society will determine Sri Lanka's politics in the immediate future." However, a prior condition for this to happen will have to be a negotiated solution to the ethnic conflict that has defied solution for four decades. It is the vital task of the left movement and the trade unions under

***It is the vital task of the left movement and the trade unions under their leadership to socially educate their members and the masses to rise above linguistic and religious chauvinisms, both of the majority and that of the minorities, and thereby prepare the ground for a solution to this conflict.***

their leadership to socially educate their members and the masses to rise above linguistic and religious chauvinisms both of the majority and that of the minorities and thereby prepare the ground for a solution to this conflict.

The book contains four documents included in the Appendices that focus on disappearances and on the controversy over Amnesty International reports on Sri Lanka. An interesting and welcome feature in the book is the attempt made to acknowledge and honor the achievements of the LSSP (old left) contrary to frequent attempts made by sections of the new left to denigrate and deny the solid and lasting contributions made by Lanka's first and dedicated generation of socialists. ■

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