

Land Reform □

Removing roadblocks

A QUIET revolution is radically altering social and economic structures in the Philippine countryside. Land reform, which had been a paper dream in the past, is now being pushed with great vigor by a government unhampered by oligarchic politicians. Just three-and-a-half years after proclamation of authoritarian rule, some 210,054 tenants have received land transfer certificates. Those certificates entitle farmers to have full ownership of the land after they have fully paid their obligations.

Despite decades of pious intent by generations of national leaders, the Filipino peasants have remained in bondage to the soil. The farmer contends not only with forces of nature—floods, droughts, typhoons—but also with absentee landlords, overbearing usurers and unscrupulous middlemen. Not surprisingly, until the introduction of "miracle rice" in the early 1960s, the average yield per hectare of Philippine rice land was barely 50 cavans, which was among the lowest in the world. Agrarian unrest has understandably found fertile ground in Central Luzon, the main rice-producing region.

On September 26, 1972, just five days after he proclaimed martial law, President Marcos decreed the entire country a land-reform area. Covered by the decree were some 1.1 million rice and corn farmers. A month after, the President enacted the Tenant Emancipation Decree. Written in his own hand, it transferred to every tenant-farmer ownership of the land he tilled and provided the mechanism for its acquisition.

The following is a progress report on the land reform program as of January 31, 1976.

Operation Land Transfer. In November 1972, the President directed the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) to start issuing certificates of land transfer (CLTs) to tenants. As of January 31, 1976, half or 53 percent of the target number of farmer beneficiaries have received their CLTs. The recipients total 210,054 farmers cultivating 549,054.633 hectares of rice and corn lands in 64 provinces. The Land Bank has also paid 706 payment claims from former landowners at a cost of P237.563 million.

The speed of land transfer under martial law can be gauged by comparison with the accomplishments of previous administrations stretching back to the Commonwealth period. According to Agrarian Reform Secretary Conrado F. Estrella, the number of beneficiaries of the land reform program from September 1972 to January 1976 is more than six times the total number of beneficiaries from 1949 to 1972. In terms of

hectare covered by the program, the New Society record is a little more than three years to four times as wide as that achieved in three decades before the proclamation of martial law.

The goal of the agrarian reform program was to transfer 1,422,955 hectares of rice and corn lands to 214,314 tenant-farmers. The priorities were land-holdings of 100 hectares and above, then down to 50 hectares, then further down to 24 hectares and finally those below 24 hectares.

According to Estrella, land transfer was relatively easy on the big landholdings. But resistance grew as the program went downward to the smaller holdings. Many small landowners complained that the program was unfair, arguing that if the purpose of agrarian reform was to strengthen the middle class, then why dislodge those who are already there?

Listening to the small landowner's plea, the President, on the basis of a cabinet committee report, temporarily excluded landholdings of seven hectares and less from operation land transfer. The land remains with the landowners. However, if there are tenants, they shall not be removed but continue tilling the land under leasehold arrangement. Landowners of less than 24 hectares were also given additional incentives in the form of higher cash payments for their lands and other benefits.

The seven hectares and below category comprises 663,978 hectares or 46.4 percent, 521,136 tenant-farmers or 56.9 percent and 371,129 landowners or 29.5 percent.

By the exclusion of the seven hectares and below, the new coverage stands as follows: land area—759,015 hectares; tenant-farmers—393,773; and landowners—39,560.

There is great possibility, according to Estrella, that the new coverage may still increase because of indications that landowners of seven hectares and below may voluntarily transfer their lands to their tenants due to incentives offered by the government.

A comparative analysis of the land tenure profile of tillers shows that as of October 21, 1972, only 1.2 percent of all tenanted rice and corn lands were in the hands of absentee owners which totaled only 1.4 percent of all rice and corn farmers. DAR records show that since the launching of Operation Land Transfer in November, 1972, 29.6 percent of the tenanted rice and corn lands are being cultivated by absentee owners.

Programs of Support. Integrated with the land transfer program is the Samahang Nayons with a membership of around 784,219 and generating capital

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
000000] Land Registration Commission
REGISTERED DEEDS (RD) 100.

Transfer Certificate of Title

No. 000001

Entered in accordance with Section 2 of Presidential Decree No. 266, dated August 4, 1973, pursuant to an EMANCIPATION PATENT issued by the Department of Agrarian Reform, at Quezon City, on the 21st day of October 1972, and in accordance with Section 2 of Presidential Decree No. 27, dated October 21, 1972, and in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 266, dated August 4, 1973, and Presidential Decree No. 27, dated October 21, 1972, there is hereby granted unto the

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF AGRARIAN REFORM
EMANCIPATION PATENT No. 000000

"TO ALL WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME, GREETINGS.

"WHEREAS, pursuant to the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 27, dated October 21, 1972, DECREARING THE EMANCIPATION OF TENANTS FROM THE BONDAGE OF THE SOIL, TRANSFERRING TO THEM THE OWNERSHIP OF THE LAND THEY TILL, AND PROVIDING THE INSTRUMENTS AND MECHANISM THEREFOR, a Certificate of Land Transfer was issued on _____, 1972, unto _____, TENANT, Y. ACRES covering a parcel of agricultural land, situated in the Barrio of _____, Municipality of _____, Province of _____, Philippines, containing an area of _____ (_____) square meters, more or less, which is now more particularly bounded and described at the back hereof.

"AND WHEREAS, it has been established that the herein grantee has fully complied with the requirements for the final grant of title under said Presidential Decree No. 27.

"NOW, THEREFORE, KNOW YE, That by authority of the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 266, dated August 4, 1973, issued in relation to Presidential Decree No. 27, dated October 21, 1972, there is hereby granted unto the said _____, the parcel of agricultural land described in the back hereof.

"TO HAVE AND TO HOLD said parcel of agricultural land in absolute ownership, with all the rights and privileges appurtenant thereto, subject to the condition that it shall not be transferred except by hereditary succession or to the Government in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 27, Code of Agrarian Reform of the Philippines and other existing laws and regulations, and to the further condition that the herein grantee shall remain a member of a duly registered farmers' cooperative and that he shall not at any time employ tenants in the cultivation of the land.

"IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, _____, Chief of the Office of the Land Registration Commission, have caused these letters to be made patent and the seal of the Republic of the Philippines to be hereunto affixed.

Given at Quezon City, Philippines, on this _____ day of _____, 1972, in the year of Our Lord nineteen hundred and _____.

"FERDINAND E. MARCOS
President of the Philippines

"CONRADO F. ESTRELLA
Secretary of Agrarian Reform

Registered in the Registry of Deeds of _____ pursuant to Section 2 of Presidential Decree No. 266, dated August 4, 1973, on this _____ day of _____, 1972, in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 266, dated August 4, 1973, and Presidential Decree No. 27, dated October 21, 1972, and in accordance with the provisions of Presidential Decree No. 266, dated August 4, 1973, and Presidential Decree No. 27, dated October 21, 1972, there is hereby granted unto the _____, the parcel of agricultural land described in the back hereof.

REGISTERED DEEDS (RD) 100.

The first LTC, given by free stores on October 21, 1975.

amounting to P23.12 million. This amount comprises the general fund, the barter savings fund and the barter guarantee fund.

Resettlement of landless tillers is also one of the important aspects of the government's agrarian reform program.

There are 29 public agricultural settlements for landless tenants with an aggregate area of 594,316 hectares; 334,000 hectares or 60 percent of these are usable. More than 41,200 farm families are now in resettlement projects cultivating a total area of 247,218 hectares. A settler-family on the average is allocated six hectares.

Only about 4,367 farm-families were resettled from 1946 to 1972, compared to 3,191 families resettled from 1972 to June 1975. In infrastructure (road, irrigation, bridges, etc.), some P129 million worth has been constructed during martial law, compared to P22 million constructed from 1946-1972, representing some 436 percent increase.

Compact Farms. To achieve economies of scale, the farmers are encouraged to till their lands in consortia, or as "compact farms." Under this scheme, each farmer will continue to work his holdings individually, but government extension workers will draw up a farm plan to cover neighboring lots. Some 314 compact farms were organized in 1974, covering about 19,000 hectares. As of June 1975, the Agricultural Credit Administration (ACA) has granted some P15.7 million to compact farms. The DAR, in coordination with other government agencies, will soon provide incentive facilities to members of this scheme.

The DAR is currently undertaking three land consolidation projects: 557 hectares comprising the Hacienda West in Sta. Barbara, Pangasinan; 1,381 hectares of Hacienda Yulo in Barrio Patanlag, Florida Blanca, Pampanga; and three estates in Balabac, Zamboanga, Samarinas

Sur totaling 2,500 hectares.

Problems. The magnitude of coverage and the radicalness of reform have set up bottlenecks in the implementation of the program, Estrella reported. He said it needs technicians, more surveyors to hasten the pace of parcelary mapping, more lawyers to handle legal cases, more information materials beyond not just to media, but most importantly to landlords and tenants, and more money to open up new lands to resettle the landless and provide infrastructure for farmers. But more than anything else, according to the DAR Secretary, "We are worried by the traditional enemies of land reform—the ill-favored landlords, the powerful, the unmotivated elite."

Many of them, he said, are apprehensive about this program. They feel that it is a sword of Damocles over their heads and that the terms and conditions of the land transfer are confiscatory. "This is not so. The land being transferred to the tenant tillers is paid for by the government," Estrella said.

To give the landowners better privileges, the President has expanded the mode of payment from its original concept of straight amortization by the tenant-tillers in 15 annual equal installments.

In addition, former landowners can now utilize as collateral for investment projects up to 50 percent of their lands' face value.

The landowners of less than 24 hectares are given additional incentives by increasing the cash payment of 20 percent and granting them additional benefits such as insurance for their children's education and housing. All these are intended to encourage the landowners to transfer their lands to the tenant-tillers and at the same time reinvest the proceeds that they get in industrial and nonagricultural enterprises. □



Unprecedented progress in land reform.