

Beating the Odds

WITH this issue, *Public Policy* completes more than one year of publication, having brought out five quarterly issues since the last quarter of 1997. It began publication while the Asian financial crisis was hitting the region with gale force. This was a crisis that called into question the strategies of growth that had fuelled the amazing economic performance of Asia's tiger and emerging economies for more than two decades.

While the crisis devastated all of the emerging economies in Southeast Asia, it provided the setting for an auspicious debut for *Public Policy*, in that our early issues served as a forum for examining the various dimensions of the crisis. In fact, the essays in *Public Policy* were among the first to put under critical light the conventional views on globalization deemed responsible for Asia's phenomenal market-driven growth.

We are gratified that the region's scholars, who have been studying economic and political events, responded to our request to interpret the turbulent events in both their economic and political ramifications. We think that we have succeeded in a modest way in illuminating the issues raised by the crisis.

In this last issue for 1998, we have somewhat shifted our focus to the domestic Philippine scene, not because the Asian crisis has abated but because we wish to highlight the centennial of the Philippine Republic, a celebration of the proclamation of the first Asian republic which signalled the Filipino struggle for independence from colonial rule. This issue explores the cultural aspects of the Philippine Centennial, for a centennial is not only a political but also a cultural and historical commemoration.

In this issue, Teresa Encarnacion-Tadem, a scholar on the peasant movement in the Philippines, throws light on the cooptation of the peasant-based rebellion in Central Luzon into a state-supported land reform scheme following the People Power Revolution of 1986. Encarnacion-Tadem describes the incorporation of the former rebels led by the former New People's Army chief, Bernabe 'Commander Dante' Buscayno, into an essentially patronage-based cooperative pumped full of state-resources by the Aquino government which showcased it as the administration's model of agrarian reform. The study shows that the cooperative scheme collapsed because it was based not only on the patronage

system but more so on the special relationship between President Aquino and Buscayno. The essay introduces a new perspective in the assessment of agrarian reform programs.

Raul Pertierra discusses the many dimensions of culture. He then narrows his focus on the Philippines where Filipino culture and the search of a national identity are being dissected as part of the Centennial project. Pertierra points out that 'too many of our cultural images and conceptions are rooted in the past'. He argues that 'views of the colonial past (e.g. anti-Hispanic) often set the limits rather than provide the openings for new futures'. Instead, what is needed are 'images celebrating possible but not yet realized futures' where culture can be seen as a 'quest for emancipation'.

From Gregory Bankoff comes the view that the Philippine Centennial had to be carefully crafted to suit the political, social and cultural requirements of the nation in the late 20th century. The essay explores the way in which the administration of President Fidel Ramos tried to conceptualize the celebration to conform to the demands of the state ideology, *Philippines 2000*, which was intended to integrate the Philippines into the global economy and join the ranks of Asia's tiger economies. By commemorating the Centennial as the 'birth of a nation', Bankoff argues that the 1898 Revolution has been transformed into a nationalist origin myth whereby accuracy is less important than the construction of an appro-

priate historical identity for the present.

Kathleen Weekley analyzes the ways in which the organizers of the Philippine Centennial and their critics treat the notion of 'history'. Her essay takes issue with the way in which nationalists have understood history.

Thelma Kintanar discusses the woman warrior as a unifying image of various manifestations of the empowered in the literatures of Southeast Asia. The works discussed include poetry from the Philippines and Thailand, fiction from Vietnam and Indonesia. They portray women in the struggle to free themselves from the oppressive cultural traditions and cope with the disruptive events in the history of their countries.

The election of a former movie star Joseph Estrada as president of the Philippines in the May 1998 elections prompted Patrick Flores to examine how the Estrada presidency amalgamated a career in the movies into politics, and the consequences of the translation of this amalgamation into political decisions.

This year-end issue rounds up what could be said to be a productive year for the journal. These are interesting times for the region and we hope to continue providing our readers with the critical insights and analyses that can see us through another extraordinary year.

