

Christians Against Globalization In The Philippines

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the Basic Christian Communities in the Philippines that work to counter human and environmental rights violations resulting from macro-economic development processes. While not every activist-led and mass-based people's movement includes critical environmental issues on their agendas for social change, this paper directs its attention to the progressive Basic Christian Community movement that incorporates an environmentally concerned and team-oriented approach to problem-solving at the local level. This movement is part of an international bottom-up effort to counteract some of the negative effects of global capitalism (e.g., the fragmentation of close-knit communities that were once based on sharing and the commoditization of natural and social life). The article delineates the non-dogmatic post-Marxist ideology and liberation theology behind the progressive side of the Philippine Basic Christian Community movement and then examines one Basic Christian Community structure. Finally it argues that the Basic Christian Community provides a more viable approach to solving the Philippine poverty and environmental problem than top-down capitalist integration theory has to offer.

Introduction: The World Capitalist Transformation of the Philippines as Context for the Progressive Philippine Liberation Theology Movement

The Spanish colonization of the Philippines (1521-1896) had a disintegrating effect on the cultural and political economy. The Spanish disrupted traditional values, communal practices, and social relations by instituting a new class structure that served colonial interests and that undermined the pre-existing power structure. They brought with them a feudalistic production mode that activated the development of capitalism in the islands. Land that was held in common was increasingly privatized (Constantino 1975: 40). This instigated a process of eroding the traditional subsistence base, and created a class of landless peasants. By the 19th century, cash-cropping (sugar plantations, tobacco estates) by expropriating Filipino labor and resources began to change the productive base in a way that allowed the emergence of a small class of landed and entrepreneurial Filipino and Chinese *mestizo* elites from whom came powerful religious and political leaders. Under these divergent conditions in the relations of production, liberation theology as an integral part of the struggle for national independence emerged.

The onslaught of American colonization (1898-1946) further accelerated the capitalist penetration of the Philippines. The United States kept intact the landlord land ownership system that allowed American corporations to acquire large tracts of land. They developed plantations and expanded mining operations for U.S. industries, while landless peasants were forced to work for them at sub-minimal wages. They sought to win over the Filipinos by promoting public education but they used it as a tool to propagate American export ideology. They included some Filipino elites in their administration but they did so only after they realized that they could not defeat the Filipinos fighting for independence (Cullinane 1971: 13). There

was no change in the working conditions on the American colonial estates. In other words, there was not much difference between indentured and free wage labor; U.S. colonialism did not entirely transform the pre-existing feudal economy. Unlike under the Spanish, however, when the plantation system had to ensure the reproduction of its laborers' subsistence needs, the availability of a large pool of surplus labor beyond that of a permanent work crew freed American companies and Filipino elites from providing social security for their workers. Big business did not penetrate everywhere, and subsistence villages around the peripheries were subsumed into the logic of the capitalist reproduction of the economy.

After the Philippines became independent in 1946, the U.S. government sought to ensure its economic control so as to protect its business interests, but under the new neocolonial relationship, it did so indirectly. In exchange for rehabilitation aid to help to rebuild the country after WW II, the Americans manipulated the new republic into accepting unfair trade agreements, like the Bell Trade Act of 1946, which gave full parity rights to U.S. citizens, businesses, and corporations. This act, amended in 1955 as the Laurel-Langley Agreement, virtually assured U.S. control over the Philippine economy by making the Philippines a supplier of cheap raw materials and human resources for U.S.-dominated markets and a receiving ground for U.S.-manufactured goods (Schirmer and Shalom 1987: 90). When the Laurel-Langley Agreement expired in 1974 under the Marcos dictatorship, the United States sought to protect its economic interest mainly by an ideology of export-led growth through foreign investments. The Marcos government adopted an open-door policy for foreign investments and liberalized trade restrictions on transnational corporations in exchange for loan packages from big development agencies like the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Broad 1988).

By the time Corazon Aquino became president in 1987, after the murder of her husband Ninoy Aquino by Marco's military

in 1983, which sparked the people's power revolution that overthrew the corrupt dictator, the nation was financially in ruin. In exchange for restructuring the Philippine debt repayments, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank policies continued to exert a stranglehold over the political economy. President Fidel Ramos (1992-1997) added another U.S. \$650 million loan from the United States to the Philippine foreign debt (Chant and McIlwaine 1995: 55). The deployment of overseas contract workers as a strategy for generating foreign currency to help repay the national debt continued into the 21st century. As of 2003, seven million Filipinos (10% of the Filipino population, 20% of the domestic labor force) are estimated to be working in nearly every country around the world. Current remittances from overseas contract workers through banks have reached about \$7 billion U.S. (Arnold 2003; Bangko Sentro Pilipinas, 2002, in Weekley 2004: 351). Under these conditions of a disintegrating economy, rebellions and resistance movements, like liberation theology, came to be formed.

Progressive Philippine Liberation Theology

Progressive liberation theology in the Philippines stands in a complex and unclear relationship to Marxism, one more political in practice than in the literature. Practitioners employ Marxist analysis to solve social problems. They are not blindly calling for the overthrow of society through bloodshed and revolution. Rather, they engage in actively non-violent means of protest. Postmodern Marxism refers to non-dogmatic and creative Marxist theories that blossomed in the second half of the last century. As in Latin America and Africa, however, liberation theology in the Philippines is a risky enterprise. Practitioners often push beyond the limits of safety.

Philippine liberation theology acted out through the agencies of Basic Christian Communities can be divided into two

theoretical camps: one finds its origins in capitalist modernization theories (e.g., capitalist integration theory), and the other is rooted in post-Marxist development theories (e.g., World System theory; Dependency theory; the Development of Underdevelopment theory). On the one side, some Philippine liberation theologians aim to reform the capitalist system from within by encouraging their constituents to become small entrepreneurs. On the other side, practitioners seek to transform the capitalist system into a new socialist economy by founding self-help communities that use local resources to meet their own needs. The latter communities are perceived by them to be less dependent on the market. This paper focuses primarily on the latter group.

From 1993 to 1994, I conducted fieldwork on the liberation theology movement on the island of Cebu. In particular, I observed that there were two principal and opposing models: liberational Basic Christian Communities and liturgical/developmental Basic Ecclesial Communities. The liberational model focused more on changing social structure, while the liturgical/developmental model was concerned with changing the individual person. Cebu's Archdiocesan office was organizing developmental/liturgical Basic Ecclesial Communities by starting with parish-based bible study groups. In contrast, the Basic Christian Community Office (founded earlier than the establishment of the new Archdiocesan office) was organizing liberational Basic Christian Communities. Although some bishops and priests approved of it, the Basic Christian Community office did not have the official approval of the church hierarchy as of 1994. This article looks, retrospectively, at one of these liberational Basic Christian Communities located in the uplands of Cebu.

History of Philippine Basic Christian Communities

The Basic Christian Community movement traces its roots back to the early Christian church and to the Filipino struggle against colonial and neocolonial dominance by Spain (1565-1898), the United States (1898-1946), and the Filipino elite. The contemporary movement arose in reaction to Marco's martial law dictatorship (1972-1986), during which time global capitalist processes were augmented in the Philippines. Church leaders referred to Vatican II (1962-1965) social teachings to fight for the rights of the oppressed inside the nation. They worked to organize and increase the class-consciousness of the poor and to improve their circumstances. Latin American liberation theologies influenced these social action workers. The Maryknolls¹ institutionalized this movement in Davao province on the southern island of Mindanao in 1967. From there the movement spread to the rest of the nation.

The Basic Christian Community movement was formalized at the Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference, in Davao City, Mindanao, in 1971 after the Conference of Latin American Bishops in Medellin, Colombia in 1968. The Catholic Bishops Conference, the National Secretariat for Social Action, and the United Church of Christ (a coalition of Protestant churches) endorsed the movement in 1977. The annual Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference provided a forum for bishops to discuss their ideas with other clergy and lay participants organizing the Basic Christian Communities. These communities encouraged people to solve their own problems by using local resources, whenever possible, to meet their own needs. The bishops debated issues such as the question of the degree of lay participation in the Basic Christian Communities and the organizational structure of the church. Initially, the Basic Christian Community model was introduced as a way to encourage the laity to become more actively involved in the liturgy. Later, some bishops stressed the importance of lay leadership and organization training

programs directed at issues of social justice and liberation of the poor. This led to a controversy that portended to divide the movement. On the one side, some bishops perceived the Basic Christian Communities to be an encroachment on the institutional power of the church. On the other side were those who stressed the ecclesiality of these communities. The term ecclesial refers to the people of God as the body of the church. This disagreement between the conservatives (those advocating the hierarchical church) and the progressives (those promoting the popular church) resulted in a deadlock that closed the meetings in 1983 when the bishops met apart from the lay board (Kinne 1990).

Many progressive clergy involved in the earlier Mindanao-Sulu Pastoral Conference were transferred by their religious superiors to conservative parishes in the Visayas and Luzon, while conservative bishops were transferred to replace them, and in theory, their programs, a reshuffling which continues into the new millennium. In this context many of the Christians critical of the martial law regime and involved in the Basic Christian Community movement and its task forces for social justice were forced underground during that period. They were under military surveillance and had reason to fear for their lives.

Concurrently, the Roman Catholic administration in Rome silenced some of the more vocal religious proponents (e.g., see Boff 1986) of liberation theology. However, the liberation theology movement represented the people's church, not necessarily the hierarchical church. It is integrated into the progressive wing of all the churches. Even though it was forced underground in the Philippines, as it was in Germany during World War II (see Bonhoeffer 1983), it continued unabated. Liberation theology is not stagnant but a process that changes and adapts with the changing times. After Ferdinand Marcos was ousted from power by the well-known People's Power Revolution in 1986, the Basic Christian Community movement flourished. In

1991, at the Second Plenary Council held in Cebu in the central Philippines, this community model was officially decreed by the church hierarchy as "the new way of being a church." The new model was added to diocesan management networks throughout the nation but some conservative archdiocesan centers began to stress the liturgical over the liberational aspect. Today there are both kinds of small Christian communities in the Philippines. However, only the liberational model offers a bottom-up and participatory approach to solving real social problems (Nadeau 2002; see also Boff 1986).

The liberational Basic Christian Community movement is influenced by postmodern theories of biblical hermeneutics, world system, dependency, and non-dogmatic mode of production theories. It involves a paradigmatic shift from one where economic development and the environment are viewed as separate entities to a new paradigm in which business and ethics are linked to promote greater societal and environmental wellbeing (see Escobar 1995). The movement struggles against the entry of destructive mining operations, logging operations, and land conversion programs, calling instead for a new society based on ecologically sustainable modes of production in connection with new forms of political and social relationships. Therefore, organizers can be found at work in situations where Marxism fails to mobilize people and liberal capitalism fails to effect societal wellbeing. They are involved in the collaborative and time-consuming work of organizing people on their own behalf. Members pray together and use lessons from the bible as a springboard to reflect on how they can solve their problems in order of priority. Gaspar (2001: 320) refers to this process as a struggle for justice and peace, to promote human rights and total and integral human development. Also, he points out that there is a need to incorporate the deconstruction of security and peace into this alternative framework.

More specifically, the movement uses an approach for the social and economic development of the Philippines based on

sustainable development theory. The sustainable development concept has been broadly defined by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) as "development that ensures that the utilization of resources and the environment today does not damage the prospects for their use by future generations." Barrameda (1993), who reviewed the theoretical applications of sustainable development in the Philippines, refers to development as a process that cannot be understood outside of an already existing (mind-body-society-nature) "totality" because everything is interconnected. According to her, development refers to a social and structural process for achieving ecological sustainability and human wellbeing within a community as a whole. It refers to the qualitative improvement of all groups and individuals in a society. The liberational Basic Christian Community plan is to develop self-reliant communities that meet the needs of residents by using local resources. They aspire to be local sustainable development experiments. They network with each other to develop self-help communities and to develop diversified organic farming and social services that are supported by the local industry. Members are encouraged to reinterpret Christian symbols and scriptures to reflect their own themes for liberation. A key method in this approach involves establishing critical awareness among the poor regarding their own circumstances (Freire 1973).

The bottom-up plan of the Basic Christian Community movement provides an alternative to ruling elite models for the development of poor communities and works to reconstruct social, cultural, and ecological relationships, by involving poor people in their own development process. The liberational model contradicts the predominantly top-down and export-oriented approach of the Philippine government. The top-down government plan considers progress to be determined largely by global economic forces. It implies that economic growth will someday trickle down to benefit the majority of local people by generating the surplus needed to solve their

problems. However, as shown by the following example, top-down modernization theory fails to address the Philippine problems of poverty and environmental degradation, as one might expect of a process which enriches the few by the use of cheap labor of the many and the use of cheap resources (e.g., land, forests, minerals) acquired through "development" based on the global capitalist model.

Ethnography of a Basic Christian Community

I have argued that liberational Basic Christian Communities in the Philippines employ non-dogmatic and bottom-up development approaches that are theoretically grounded in Marxist social theory and liberation theology. Each week from 1993 to 1994, I visited an upland corn farming community with a liberational Basic Christian Community on Cebu island. Members worked with an outside agricultural team that acted as the socioeconomic arm of this Basic Christian Community movement. The team took an interdisciplinary approach to developing sustainable organic farms and worked with *alayons*, closely knit groups of farmers who helped each other, collectively, to cultivate the fields and with other tasks, as needed. My primary methods used were formal and informal interviews and participant observation. I decided to focus on this community because of its comprehensive program, which included activities ranging from social analysis and creative theater to health care and sustainable agricultural development. This section presents basic geographic, socioeconomic, and historic data, collected, largely, by the farmers in collaboration with the non-government organizers as part of their labor apostolate. Their data combined with my own presents their situation from their own point of view. I analyze these findings as an actively engaged and outside participant observer.

The community under discussion is located on a mountaintop far from the island capital.² With only one unpaved road leading to this *barrio*, travel is difficult. The road is narrow and steep; during the rainy season parts of it are washed out completely. One passenger jeep makes two trips daily to the mountaintop *barrio*; several motorcycles are available for hire. Most farmers walk to and from the town center, to the public market and parish center because they cannot afford to pay for transportation.

The farmers are mostly tenants who cultivate corn and raise chickens, goats, and pigs. A few own cows and *carabaos* (water buffaloes). Their homes are spread over hills, with wide spaces between them, and typically are constructed of light materials: cogon grass and coconut leaves for roofs and bamboo for floors and walls. Only the *barrio* captain and three families have homes partially of concrete. There are 143 extended nuclear households, or 700 residents, divided into three neighborhoods, each with its small chapel. Only 200 people, representing 39 households, participated in the Basic Christian Community activities, apparently due to two factors. First, and most important, those who did not participate have small children at home and are too busy caring for their farms; they simply lack the time and freedom of movement for church work. Second, in 1987, the military and leading anti-communist propagandist, Jun Alcover of BYLA Radio (a known black propaganda station run by the military counterintelligence unit) visited this *barrio* and others to warn farmers not to attend the Basic Christian Community, which they labeled as a "Communist front." At present, counterintelligence announcers propagandize against "terrorists," rather than "communists," since the fall of the Soviet Union ended the so-called communist threat. Also, a paramilitary informer reports members' activities to police, military officials and the mayor.

The typical household in the study site consists of five members. Those older than 65 years live in separate houses

adjacent to one of their married children, or with them. Male household heads and single men and women between the ages of 16 and 25 often migrate to work as domestic servants, store employees, hotel workers, factory workers, truck drivers, or construction workers. Some women I talked with aspired to marry foreigners. Farmers over age 40 tend to remain in the village. According to the survey conducted by the local farmers and organizers in 1993, 76% of the farmers are tenants who cultivate an average farm of 0.78 hectares. The other 24% are owner-cultivators, with an average farm of 2.3 hectares. The most common arrangement is that one-third of the harvest goes to the landowner and two-thirds of the harvest to the tenant. A few flatland tenants surrender fully one-half of their harvest. Tenants are pressured to pay landowners cash, at the rate of 25 *centavos* per harvested ear of corn. Absentee landlords live in the town center or further away. One retired landlord lives in the village. His father once owned nearly 90% of the land there.

Ironically, the resident landlord confessed to be in financial difficulty. His extended family struggles to send children to secondary school and college. He could hardly pay for medicine for his wife, hospitalized in a public hospital. He is still wealthy by local standards; four of his tenant farmers barely survived the summer of 1993, eating root crops and kamungay (leaves from a kamungay tree).

In the late 1980s, when the Basic Christian Community organizers first arrived, they found the farmers impoverished and struggling to survive. Many of them had forgotten traditional farming practices that were practiced by their predecessors. Instead, they had grown dependent on using expensive artificial inputs to grow their crops. The soil they cultivated was rocky and eroded. Also, they were growing a costly hybrid yellow corn that attracted insects and required chemical fertilizers and artificial pesticides. In 1991, the Basic Christian Community organizers challenged the farmers to solve their problems by

using resources available in their immediate environment. They introduced a traditional white variety of corn and organic farming techniques. The farmers quickly adopted the church's organic farming program because the traditional white corn could be stored and used longer than the yellow hybrid variety. Also, it was more pest resistant and did not require costly artificial inputs. The decision of the farmers to adopt the program and maintain their livelihood in terms of "use-value" as opposed to "exchange-value" can be seen as a form of resistance based on cultural differences. As elsewhere in Asia, South and Latin America, and Africa, Filipino peasant cultures differ from the dominant cultures of European origins regarding land, food, and the economy. Readers can refer to my review of the clash between Filipino peasant culture in Northern Luzon and that of the Green Revolution (Nadeau 1992). Also, for a well-known Latin American example see Taussig (1980).

The farmers used to think that being religious meant to attend Mass regularly, and keep the sacraments. Those who were perceived to be devout Catholics practiced outward forms of religious behavior. However, the Basic Christian Community organizers introduced the farmers to a new way of practicing their religion by actually reading and applying lessons learned from the bible. They used local metaphors and real life examples to explain what Jesus taught. Whereas the farmers used to rely exclusively on priests and religious teachers to read and interpret the bible for them, the organizers now empowered them to discern the meaning of the scriptures for themselves and in conjunction with the clergy. This new way of practicing their religious faith was derived, largely, from liberation theology and post-Vatican II social teachings.

Most farmers were tenants. They had been so for less than 20 years. They became tenants by mortgaging their land to other farmers or usurers through a mortgage system known as *prenda*. As Cynthia Hallare-Lara (1992: 20) explained, *prenda* compels farmers to surrender their title and in some cases till-

ing rights, to other farmers or usurers for cash over time. They usually work the land for an average of 2 to 5 years, while it is mortgaged. Many Kabukiran farmers borrowed money to buy fertilizers to cultivate new high-yielding varieties of corn that were in vogue due to the Green Revolution in the 1970s. At that time, development agents encouraged them to plant hybrid corn to increase production in order to improve farmers' income. However, during times of bad harvest or drought, the farmers fell into debt. They could not repay the loan balances, then mortgaged and later lost their land due to modernization.

Bypassing usurers and creditor-landlords who offer high interest loans (20 to 30% interest rate per month), Basic Christian Community participants, with the help of the monsignor, secured a low interest loan (with an interest rate of 1.5%) from an Archdiocesan Church Foundation for the indigent, which they used to buy cows, goats, and chickens. After about 4 months, they were to divide the profit of the sale of the original cow, goat, or chicken between themselves and the parish. Accordingly, two-thirds of the profit went to the caretaker, one-sixth to the Basic Christian Community fund, and one-sixth to the parish fund, which serves as a revolving community fund for emergency (e.g., when a goat dies or fails to gain weight or produce offspring). This loan program enables farmers to avoid high-interest loans and other disproportionate sharing arrangements from local creditors to start their income-generating projects. Yet, many Basic Christian Community farmers cannot sell their chickens in the local market because they are branded as "Communist chickens" by some non-affiliated neighbors. Thus, in times of emergency (death or serious illness) they usually sell their produce to usurer-traders who, also, lend them extra money at high interest rates.

In short, these farmers are mutually supportive of each other and are aware that they participate in both the commercial market and their own subsistence economy. They know that

they are being marginalized by those who control the market. Also, they try to lessen their contacts with the latter because of the high costs involved. The economy of the Basic Christian Community is based largely on use-value: the everyday use of local resources in their surrounding natural environment. The outside agricultural team in the community aimed to eradicate the outmoded idea by which farmers saw themselves as beneficiaries of an agricultural program: They say: "We are trying to erase this idea because it encourages the farmers to depend on us for dole-outs." The non-government organization, also, wanted to make the farmer's teams more participatory by training them to work together, collectively, in larger numbers. Another aim was to encourage farmers in their traditional pre-capitalist practices, such as not counting the hours they work. As one non-government organizer stated:

The farmers are not yet business people. We are trying to retain an attitude that they don't have to count. Their only capital is their labor and time. So, we try to encourage them to work cooperatively because one way of getting enough or producing more resources is to multiply their labor. Also, we do not have any alternatives because they do not have any finances (interview 1993).

The farmers taught non-government organizers about local water resources, types of farmlands, crops, and soils. They listed their problems in order of priority at general assembly meetings, which met as needed. Farmers and organizers worked together to meet local needs. In the words of one female farmer:

The non-government organizers taught us how to improve our barren land. They encouraged us to plant a variety of trees in our farm lots. They gave us earthworms to improve our soils' fertility. As a whole the non-government organization is good and helps us to know about our basic problems. It helps us to know the causes of our problems

such as poverty and inequality of distribution of wealth among the Filipino community. The non-government organization, also, helped us establish our integrated Basic Christian Community.

Basic Christian Community members meet regularly to read and reflect on the bible, for example, on birthdays and special occasions. These bible-sharing activities motivate, validate, and bring together the community for cooperation and economic and political action. Participants view bible-sharing as a time of interaction and learning from one another's interpretations, rather than as a form of meditation and prayer (e.g., novenas, rosaries, and vigils). They see Christ's faith-life experiences as an expression of their own community values and faith. For example, the message of Christ to help one another and love one another serves to encourage families to help neighbors by working for each other without pay. Men and women participate equally in reading scripture; their sharings may be called "down to earth." There is an element of spontaneity in their reflections, absent from Basic Christian Communities that I have observed in the cities. For example, one member compared the resurrection of Lazarus to a caterpillar transformed into a butterfly, and how a farmer's life can be so transformed by turning the sale of a cow into land. In this instance, resurrection is interpreted as transformation and not just a continuation of Lazarus' life. The social contexts in which members interact with other people (e.g., landlords, government and military personnel, disinterested neighbors) and the institutional church are situations in which new ideas and cultural forms are continuously introduced, negotiated, and transformed. While the church may incorporate or exclude many indigenous religious customs and beliefs, Basic Christian Communities continue to assert their own religiosity and culture. They reintroduce traditional cultural and religious practices to resist being fragmented by capitalist relations of production.

This section has looked at an example of a provincial government's unsuccessful attempt to intimidate farmers from establishing a Basic Christian Community in the Philippines. I have argued that the bottom-up approach of the Basic Christian Community provides a more holistic development approach than outside packages that emphasize increasing agricultural production for the global market but not social and ecological wellbeing. The following section looks at the issue of development aggression and the counter-strategy of religious social action workers for building a more just and community-oriented society while promoting sustainable development.

Globalization and Human Rights

Since its inception, the United Nations has worked to develop a comprehensive set of international rights through a varied set of conventions: for example, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951), the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), the United Nations International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979), the United Nations' Declaration of the Right of Peoples to Peace (1984), United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (1986), and the African (Banju) Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1986).³ During this time period, three generations of human rights have come into being (Van Ness 1999). The first generation of rights are civil and political rights intended to protect the individual from the State. These rights are rooted in the individualistic traditions of Western Europe and North America. The second generation of rights are economic, social, and cultural rights that reflect the priorities of socialist countries and Marxist philosophical

traditions which seek to address the problems of the poor (starvation, illiteracy, and disease) and that have the objective to improve their material standard of living. The third generation of rights refers to peoples' rights or collectivist rights and responds to the particular priorities and realities of formerly colonized countries and indigenous groups, and their emphasis on the right to self-determination (e.g., Cuba) and self-directed development (e.g., the Philippines).

Of particular importance to macroeconomic development are the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (1966), and International Covenant of Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (1976). By 1995, 127 states ratified the Covenant of Civil and Political Rights, and 129 nations ratified the Covenant for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. The Philippine government ratified both covenants. The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was signed December 19, 1966, ratified, February 28, 1986, and implemented on January 23, 1987, and the Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights was signed December 19, 1966, ratified, May 17, 1974, and took effect on January 3, 1976. Although the Philippines has signed and ratified these covenants, it has failed to incorporate them into national policy and practice.

This section is concerned with the issue of development aggression and the corresponding response of liberational Basic Christian Communities in their call for a just and sustainable development paradigm. As Gaspar (2001: 327) states: "This new development paradigm marks a transition in terms of what is happening to the power structure: as people are liberated from disempowerment, the last become first. As they are empowered, the first become last. For well-being to become sustainable, and equitable, there is a need to dismantle the prison of power that makes the powerful possess the powerless." Development aggression can be defined as the process of displacing people from their land and homes to make way for development schemes that are being imposed from above

without consent or public debate. It is contrary to the United Nations Declaration of the Right to Development (1986 in Ishay 1997: 469), which “recognizes that development is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural, and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom.”

Physically destructive forms of development aggression can be characterized as a political process wherein police and military forces work in cooperation with local governments to dislodge poor farmers from their land, while depriving the urban poor of homes and jobs, all in the name of development. Less visible forms of development aggression co-opt and subvert local symbols by giving them new duplicitous meanings, while implanting inappropriate macroeconomic technology (e.g., genetically modified seeds that do not produce viable offspring). For example, sustainable development agriculture once referred only to organic farming but now refers to agroc capitalist industrial complexes as well. Either way, aggressive development is in violation of international human rights conventions such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which states that “all peoples have a right to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development” (1966 cited in Ishay 1997: 433).

An example of development aggression on a macro-scale is the United States’ secret wars and interventions into the internal operations of other nation states. For example, the United States government supported the Ferdinand Marcos dictatorship for many years. Also, the United States, notably under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Sr., sanctioned the use of paramilitary forces against the Basic Christian Communities, among other protest groups (Bello 1987; Nadeau and Suminguit 1996: 246). Such interventions are in violation of the Helsinki

Agreement (1975) which states that "...participating states will refrain from intervention, direct or indirect, individual or collective, in the internal or external affairs falling within the domestic jurisdiction of another participating state, regardless of their mutual relations" (cited in Ishay 1997: 452).

Countering development aggression are grassroots peoples' organizations, like the Basic Christian Communities, supported by non-government organizations and grassroots intellectuals who are researching and reporting on rights violations that occur as a result of inappropriate development schemes. In the early 1990s, I accompanied several non-government organizations (the Redemptorist Justice and Peace Desk, the Farmers Development Center [FARDEC], Task Force Detainees, and the Health Alliance for Democracy) who then were working together as a tightly knit network to document human rights abuses (e.g., forced dislocations, tortures, arrests without warrants) on Cebu, which were happening as a result of real estate development projects that were being built on inhabited land. Inappropriate development can be defined as a globalizing economic and political process coming into a community from outside that community that severely damages a community's culture, social organization, and environment. Another example would be a community (e.g., Pardo, Antique, and Tuburan, also, in Cebu) placed under military surveillance to allow the government free reign in pursuit of capitalist-oriented development (Nadeau 2002). By contrast, appropriate development can be defined in accordance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Ishay 1997) as a process for achieving ecological sustainability and human wellbeing within a community as a whole. It refers to a holistic (social, cultural, political, and economic) process that leads to the qualitative improvement of all individuals and groups in a society.

Conclusion

Finally, the case study can be seen as part of a global trend toward the development of grassroots alternatives to the hegemonic discourse, symbols, and economic structures of global capitalism. The type of liberation theology discussed here seeks to establish a necessary connection between religious truths and social and economic justice. The Philippine example is part of an international movement that opposes top-down globalization that is imposed without ordinary people's consent. Clearly on-the-ground efforts to help people are more effective than abstract theories. Anthropologists can serve to encourage such bottom-up efforts as those of liberational Basic Christian Communities in Cebu, by working to include them in political strategies for sustainable development.

NOTES

- 1 The Maryknolls are a Roman Catholic religious and missionary order of priests and nuns.
- 2 The name and real location of this community is anonymous here for purposes of protecting my partners of study.
- 3 The content of these conventions can be found in *The Human Rights Reader*, edited by Micheline R. Ishay and published by Routledge Press in 1997.

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