

# Book Reviews

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## **Famine Diary: Journey to a New World**

Gerald Keegan

Reprinted 1991; new edition,  
Wolfhound Press, Dublin, 1991  
Paperback £5.95; 144pp

## **A Voice for Somalia**

Mary Robinson, President of Ireland  
O'Brien Press, Dublin, 1992  
Paperback £6.95, 96pp

Media coverage and discussion of African famine, in particular in the context of Mary Robinson's visit to Somalia, have frequently emphasised Irish folk memory of famine and its influence on our response to contemporary starvation. Two recently-published famine diaries provide an opportunity to more fully investigate how the Irish famine of the 1840s is remembered and the relevance of this experience to contemporary famines.

*Famine Diary: Journey to a New World* appeared in Summer 1991, published as a contribution to the Action from Ireland (AFri) Great "Famine" project. The cover "blurb" explains that this is the "touching, personal diary" of Gerald Keegan who, with his newly-wed wife, Eileen, left Sligo in 1847 and travelled on the *Naparima* to Canada. To read the account of his eight-week journey in a "coffin ship" to Grosse Ile is, its publisher claims, to encounter "the human face of the statistics of the Great Irish Famine".

Immediate reaction to the diary was largely favourable; within two months, Gerald Keegan's *Famine Diary* had entered the Irish bestseller lists. Gradually, however, questions as to its factual nature and the role of its editor, James J. Mangan, began to gather force. Even before fuller details of its origins became available, readers in Summer 1991 had ample grounds for suspicion. Mangan's introduction says that the text comes from his photostat copy of a rare diary, first published in 1895, and that he has edited Keegan's diary in order "to make it intelligible" to readers unfamiliar with the historical background to emigration in 1847. This involved "substantial additions": changing dates, new characters and modernising Keegan's language. Where these additions and changes actually occur is not indicated in the text; therefore a reader begins *Famine Diary* quite bewildered as to whose words one is reading: those of the twentieth-century editor or the nineteenth-century emigrant and uncomfortably aware that the diary had been "used", as its editor acknowledges, to present a particular picture "of the meaning of the Grosse Ile tragedy".

What the reader cannot know is the extent of Mangan's additions; nor does the introduction reveal the story behind this publication. The full history emerged in two articles some months after publication: "*Famine Diary* - the making of a best seller"

by Jim Jackson in the *Irish Review* of Winter 1991, and "Mixing history and fiction" by Jacqueline Kornblum in the *Irish Literary Supplement* of Spring 1992. Jackson and Kornblum showed that Mangan's source was not the original diary of a famine emigrant but a story entitled "The summer of sorrow" in which Keegan appeared as a character. The author was Robert Sellar, a Scottish radical journalist living in Canada, who first published it in an 1895 book, *Gleaner Tales, Volume 2: The Summer of Sorrow, Abner's Device and Other Stories*, a title clearly displaying rather than obscuring its status as story. This tale was the basis for Mangan's *The Voyage of the Naparima* published in Canada in 1982, virtually identical to the 1991 Irish version *Famine Diary*.

A comparison with Sellar's work shows that Mangan added an extraordinary amount of material; e.g. the section in Sellar's tale on Keegan's life in Ireland before emigration is a little over 10%; in Mangan's version, this constitutes almost half of the diary. Yet readers of *Famine Diary* remain unaware that the diary has been so substantially altered and that the earliest known origins of its "author", Gerald Keegan, are as a fictional character in 1890s Canada rather than a schoolteacher in 1840s Sligo. Such omissions constitute a very troubling editorial and publishing policy. One can further question why the admission by Mangan in his 1982 *Voyage of the Naparima* that his story "contains a fictionalized version of Keegan's journal" was omitted from the reprint of his introduction in

*Famine Diary*. As other reviewers have noted, the library classification number given by the publisher which identifies the book as non-fiction obviously needs to be changed.

The editor's inclusion of sample pages from "the original journal" only adds to the reader's confusion. An italic typeface encourages the reader to think these are photostats of the original manuscript, of Keegan's writing, rather than what are typeset extracts from Robert Sellar's tale. *Famine Diary* is a bewildering combination of nineteenth-century story and twentieth-century political analysis. The failure to differentiate them is a lost opportunity. Sellar's tale is interesting as an effort by a late nineteenth-century outsider to image the 1840s famine and Irish emigration; it bears comparison with other fictionalised accounts of Irish famine by writers such as William Carleton, Anthony Trollope and Liam O'Flaherty. Sellar's story comes across as more sensational and melodramatic than the "modernised" diary but also more vivid as in the comic incident where three women steal the mate's tea, an episode which Mangan retains.

The political analysis added by Mangan has, in many places, an unmistakably twentieth-century sound, as in his account of the mid-nineteenth-century Irish "citizen": "Deprived of all the basic rights of free human beings and, above all, of the ownership and produce of the land on which he has to live as a tenant, he is supposed, by some strange wizardry, to be energetic and self-supporting and resigned to his lot." This argument is

also best acknowledged for what it is, a retrospective political interpretation, rather than inserted into the mouth of a fictional character who is another author's creation.

Some of the ways in which *Famine Diary* has been received have once again highlighted the divisive nature of historiography concerning the 1840s famine. Recent historians have challenged nationalist data on the size of exports from Ireland and the role of ideology and have been seen as offering a sanitised version of events. Mangan's analysis repeats traditional nationalist beliefs of the scale of evictions, export of corn and forced expulsion of tenants. Unlike some commentators, he falls short of arguing that the famine was a deliberate act of genocide. Much emphasis is placed on the fundamental inequalities of the land system; this seems a reality worth repeating and one which deserves a less confused context. His interpretation of the 1840s famine lacks the depth of insight offered by writers such as Cormac O'Grada and James Donnelly whose work challenges nationalist myths while retaining an emphasis on the ideological and political factors behind famine and a sense of its human tragedy.

Late in 1992, another famine diary appeared, in this case an account of contemporary famine in Somalia by President Mary Robinson based on her three-day visit in October 1992 to Baidoa, Mogadishu and Mandera. Considering that representations of famine often take the form of simplistic, reductive and intrusive

images of passive victims, the diary begins with a welcome admission that this is "a flawed and incomplete account" by one who is not among the "participants in the horror" but one of the "visitors to it". The diary, as Mary Robinson tells us, is therefore "an act of witness". Despite her comments that it is not "an act of analysis or political insight," the reader becomes aware that witness, insight and analysis are not so easily separated. The diary is not only a significant intervention in contemporary political debates on famine and its causation but also a comment on the ways famine is represented and understood.

The impossibility of depicting an event like famine, where a writer's grief results in silence, often the perhaps understandable conclusion of artists, journalists, poets or novelists, is dismissed by Mary Robinson as "luxuries which we in the West cannot indulge. . . . They need our action, not our tears; our practical, downright, problem-solving help, and not our wordless horror." Yet many of the images through which this urgent need is brought home also require challenging: the President's efforts to go beyond the necessary photo opportunities to "talk and listen to the Somali people" have such results. Her emphasis on the existence of Somali aid workers who play a "central role in feeding, medical services and the operation of the centres . . . doctors, nurses, teachers, civil servants, part of a decimated middle class, now working voluntarily on behalf of their people" and her account of meetings with

representatives of women's organisations, women who "wanted to play a role in the reconstruction of their society", present members of the Somali people rarely visible, heard or named on our TV screens.

That this "act of witness" is by a woman is an interesting aspect of the diary and coverage of the visit. Perhaps the most memorable aspect for Irish viewers was the passionate and lucid account she gave in a press conference in Nairobi on 5 October 1992. The diary provides interesting insights into the speaker's own feelings about the conference:

In the event, because I was hit by a wall of emotion, of frustration and anger as I tried to convey what I had seen, I thought I had blown the opportunity. . . . However, I wasn't just a barrister pleading a case. I was the President of Ireland giving a personal witness and responding to the people of Somalia. Above all, I was a human being devastated by what I had seen. In that context it was impossible not to show emotion.

Her reluctance to show emotion seems, in ways, quite justified: at times coverage of the visit included waiting for the President "to break down" with a degree of anticipation absent from visits by male politicians. A purely emotional response may also, the diary suggests, be static or self-indulgent. Yet the emotion of the press conference contributed to its power. A similar tension can be noted in the emphasis on Mary Robinson's identity as mother. *A Voice for*

*Somalia* includes horrific descriptions of dying children, of mothers "whose milk had dried up", and of children "covered in sores", a reality which as a mother she found "totally unacceptable". The suffering of mothers and children was also seized upon by the media producing visual and verbal images, which seem an end in themselves rather than stimulating questions as to how and why this suffering occurs.

The significance of *A Voice for Somalia* is in its rare combination of emotional response with political analysis within an account of famine. As the Nairobi press conference included descriptions of mothers and children together with a resounding call for "new strategies, new lateral thinking about our relationship with the continent of Africa", so the diary moves from observations of suffering to a powerful challenge to the UN, to internal organisations and to each observer to develop a "people-to-people" approach whether as women, business people, rural dwellers, or members of an urban community.

*A Voice for Somalia* restates that Mary Robinson's voice is one without political power; but the power and potential of her symbolic voice should not be underestimated. A more negative view may find a certain "dejà-vu" in the location of woman's power in the symbolic sphere and some may feel a wistful longing for the conjunction of symbolic *and* political power in one female voice. In Irish attitudes to the visit by our symbolic representative, a more disturbing trend can sometimes be heard. There is a certain self-

congratulation about Mary Robinson's visit; visitors to Ireland congratulate us on the promptness of our response; there is even a certain manipulation of fact as in the description of the visit as the first by a head of state, ignoring that of President Museveni of Uganda, some time before.

Accounts of the Irish famine, including those discussed above by Robert Sellar and James Mangan, include many stories of the greed and indifference of landlords and occasional accounts of the generosity of the landowning class. The existence of such benefactors, usually women or "ministering angels", has sometimes been emphasised in order that their actions might overshadow discussion of the political and economic responsibility of their class. More recently, the Irish folk memory of famine has been much cited in the context of Irish reaction to Somalia and may be a large factor in the generosity of response to aid agencies. Yet it seems vital that analysis and argument concerning the Irish response do not rest here. Our folk memory should not obscure the fact that in the late twentieth century our position is not as potential victim but as potential donor. Mary Robinson's visit could be seen as analogous to that of a nineteenth-century Ascendancy woman dispensing occasional charity to the poor, not because of who *she* is as an individual but because of who *we* are now and where our country is situated in international terms. Her account has an important role in ensuring that her visit is not recalled

by a community in order to feel better about itself and to disguise political and economic responsibilities which, whatever the nature of our past, are now inescapably ours.

*Margaret Kelleher*

**In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture**

Kwane Anthony Appiah, Methuen, London, 1992, Stg£20, 366 pages

**The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World,**

Carlos Fuentes, André Deutsch, London, 1992, Stg£20, 399 pages

Latin American and African intellectuals have long been engaged in conversation with each other, and with Europeans and North Americans, about what it means to be African and Latin American, and the role of the intellectual in political life. Both these studies address these important issues about cultural and political identity in a critical, historical, and philosophical fashion. *The Buried Mirror: Reflections on Spain and the New World* is a major cultural interpretation of the Latin American experience which explores the political possibilities of pan-Latin Americanism. However, Fuentes, unlike Paulo Freire, is not primarily concerned with "the culture of silence", or with the political consciousness of the poor as an *economically* oppressed group. While he would no doubt accept the Freirean assumption that when an oppressed people live in silence, they use the words of their oppressor to describe their experience of oppression

and hence fail to achieve liberation, Fuentes is not centrally concerned with the marginals in Latin American society. Similarly, unlike Eduardo Galeano for example, neither does he focus on the "open veins" of Latin American poverty and colonial exploitation.

As a *haute* Latin American and a grand *cultural* nationalist, Fuentes stresses the centrality of cultural heritage, and the integrity, diversity, continuity and richness of that heritage as a basis for political consciousness and economic progress in modern Latin America. Thus he stresses the power of cultural identities, as opposed to class identities, in political regeneration and the possibilities of culture as a basis for political and economic action. For Fuentes indigenous cultural values are an antidote to foreign models of social and political progress foisted on Latin America since 1492. The latter failed because they were unrelated to the cultural reality of Latin America, and because Latin American political elites since the nineteenth century turned their back on their Hispanic roots, and imitated the worst aspects of Anglo-French and US political traditions. Thus Fuentes is not only deeply concerned about the survival of Latin America's fragile democratic tradition – he insists that it is an essentially Spanish rather than an Anglo-American inheritance. Democracy, he argues, was initially transplanted in the New World from the free municipalities of pre-colonial Spain, but withered with the rise of *caudillismo*, or authoritarian rule, in the mid-nineteenth century.

*The Buried Mirror* originated as a popular five-part Discovery/BBC television series to mark the quincentenary of Spain's "discovery" of Latin America. Fuentes used this as an opportunity to distil a politically-correct history of Latin America which recognises all the social, economic and cultural elements that went into the making of that society. Thus his history is a mirror which allows Latin Americans to look from the Americas to the Mediterranean, the source of democratic ideals and Renaissance Utopianism, and back again to Latin America, the heartland of their indigenous cultures. Fuentes justifies this culturalist approach to history on the grounds that only a rediscovery of cultural heritage will equip Latin Americans with the necessary vision to effect a convergence between intellect, politics and economics and give Latin America a new *mission civilatrice* in the coming century.

Fuentes is a classical Latin American and a Renaissance man *par excellence*. This not only causes him to celebrate sixteenth century Europe's contribution to the New World as an at once enriching and destructive experience. It causes him also to celebrate the "discovery" of America as "a triumph of scientific hypothesis over physical perception" (p.83). For Fuentes the "discovery" was a triumph of Renaissance imagination over scholastic tradition. It literally provided European Renaissance man with a stage on which he could realise his wildest ambitions by building Utopia and the City of God on Latin American soil.

Fuentes also recognises that the discovery was not only the greatest feat of Renaissance imagination. It marked the victory of maritime Spain over landed Spain, the triumph of bourgeois values over aristocratic values, and the start of the conflict between authoritarian and democratic traditions in Latin America. He argues that "capitalism and socialism have both failed in Latin America because of our inability to distinguish and strengthen our own tradition, which is authentically Iberian and not distinctively Anglo-America or Marxist" (p.72). In so doing he adopts the conventional nationalist ploy of "going nativist" and elevating the native above the foreign, and castigating as "foreign" all ideologies, especially Marxism and Anglo-American democracy not rooted in the cultural heritage of Latin America. He also shows that America was not so much "discovered" as invented. The "invention" of Latin America, of course, hastened the death of Aztec, Incan and Mayan civilizations, itself a great loss to the Renaissance world since these were not barbarous or subhuman "heathen" nations, as the "unenlightened" among the conquistadores implied, but nascent human societies with many lessons for Renaissance Europe. What the conquistadores finally achieved in the New World reflected the distance between the ideal and reality, particularly the ideal of peaceful co-existence and the realities of ethnocide and cultural and environmental imperialism. Thus Spanish America exposed the tension between the illusions of Utopia and

the realities of colonial conquest, including, to use a chillingly appropriate modern category, the harsh realities of ethnocide.

Not surprising for a novelist of his stature, the great strength of Fuentes' account of the Latin America experience stems not so much from what he reveals but in how he reveals historical insights. He has literally mined Latin American literature, art and music to produce gems of perception. Thus he uses Santos Discepolo's description of the tango as "a sad thought that can be danced" (p.289). His account of the Alhambra is as evocative as the architecture of the place itself. It becomes "a written building, its body covered with script, telling its tales and singing its poems from the inscribed walls . . . a place . . . filled with celestial graffiti, where the voice of God becomes liquid and where the joys of art, the intellect, and love can be experienced" (p.57).

However this account of the Latin American experience also suffers from a number of serious defects. Firstly, as an advocate of a pan-Latin Americanism, Fuentes often ignores the national, social class, ethnic and racial divisions in Latin American society. Secondly, the undoubted depths and literal artistry of his descriptions are not matched by any serious social class and economic analysis of Latin American history and society. Thirdly, Fuentes the novelist describes, but never convincingly explains, major episodes in Latin American and Spanish history. Thus he attributes nineteenth century authoritarianism to defects in national

character and argues that Latin American dictatorships were essentially imitative developments which copied the worst aspects of medieval Spanish feudalism and the authoritarian Anglo-French Republic tradition, to the neglect of "the true Hispanic tradition of democracy, founded on the free municipality" (p.72). In so doing he underestimates the historical and geopolitical specificity of dictatorial rule in Latin American societies, and the social class alliances with US political and economic elites that have fostered it since the nineteenth century. Fourthly, in concentrating at such length on the clash between Spanish and Indian civilization, Fuentes devotes far too little space to the influence of US foreign policy and multinational and agribusiness capital in Latin America since the formulation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823.

Finally, Fuentes never fully escapes from the machismo tradition from which he derives. Latin American women scarcely feature in his *Buried Mirror*. They are largely "hidden from history" or possessed by men, as in the case of La Malinche, the Indian lover and "women of Cortes", and first Indian mother to bear the child of the conquerer. Women are also beatified as loving and consoling figures in Fuentes' history, as in the case of La Santa Dama de Guadalupe, whose appearance at Tepeyac Hill, near Mexico City, a site previously dedicated to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin, was said to have transformed the Indian people from children of violated women to

children of the pure Virgin. Aside from this, a few aristocratic women are enshrined in nineteenth century Spanish and Latin American painting for their sexual beauty and yearnings, as in the case of Goya's Naked Maja. The undressed bodies of these Caucasian women are consecrated for their poise and theatricality, thus allowing high society to slum it in the art galleries of Spain and Latin America. Finally, Fuentes' women are famous partners of rich and powerful men, as in the case of the wife of Pedro de los Rios, governor of Panama, or Ines Suarez, a latter day Eva Peron from Extremadura, who married Pedro de Valdivia and accompanied him during the conquest of Chile. Mostly however, women in Fuentes' history, as in most cultural nationalist histories, are allocated the roles of mothers and nurturers, the bearers of future generations. As such they are either entirely hidden from history or depicted as submissive partners in a historical tango.

Appiah's *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* is a highly critical assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of race as a political and philosophical category in the twentieth century. Unlike Fuentes, he does not take pan-identities, as in pan-Africanism, as the proper basis for political organisation in the late twentieth century. He stresses instead the diversity of the African world, insisting that Africa and the Africans were not just inventions of nineteenth century racist thinkers. They are also inventions of modern African political



and social leaders, not least such founding fathers of *négritude* and pan-Africanism as Alexander Crummell, W.E.B. Du Bois, Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta. Appiah shows that race, a category decisively rejected by European political scientists after World War II, was widely adopted by African intellectuals after the War as a basis for political organisation and consciousness. As a doctrine it argued that Africans as Africans differed from other peoples and that these differences deserved to be recognised and preserved. Thus since the sixties successive defenders of *négritude* and Africanism have argued that the differences separating Africans from others were essentially racial and entailed moral and intellectual dispositions. As such they warranted differential treatment for Africans as Africans.

Appiah insists that Africans, like Americans, need to escape from obsessions with and misunderstandings about descent and ethnic differences. He stresses the need to establish the interconnections between African and world cultures and insists that race is an illusion which not only exaggerates the differences between people but is morally and intellectually inadequate as a basis for political thought and action. Unlike many narrow nationalists and African intellectuals since the sixties, Appiah refuses to "go nativist". Neither does he treat Africa as an organic community bound together by shared norms and linked by legacy of traditions that have been revived to de-colonise the

mind of Africa and to throw off the shackles of alien modes of life. Appiah argues that Black philosophy, and other ethnophilosophies like Islam, Confucianism, and European philosophy, are essentially ethnocentric and racist. For that reason they are to be rejected. However Appiah comes dangerously close to also rejecting the possibility that there are specifically African topics and concepts which deserve philosophical study. If philosophers are to contribute at the conceptual level to the solution of Africa's real problems, including the very real problems of cultural and political identities in modern Africa, they need, like Appiah, to begin with a deep understanding of the traditional conceptual worlds where the vast majority of their fellow Africans live. We cannot but agree with Appiah when he writes: "We will only solve our problems if we see them as human problems arising out of a special situation, and we shall not solve them if we see them as African problems, generated by our being somehow unlike others" (p.220). To accept, as Appian so clearly does, that Africa can be a flexible useable identity which fits a variety of local, regional, national and continental realities, is not to forget that Africans belong to multifarious communities, or to cling to the dream of a single African state. For Appiah "African" can be a vital and enabling badge, "but in a world of genders, ethnicities, classes and languages, of ages, families, professions, religions and nations, it is hardly surprising that there are times when it is not the

table we need" (p.293). His *Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* is a major critical contribution to the philosophy and political implications of race as a basis for political identities and action. It also shows us how we can dismantle the specious oppositions between us and them, between the West and the Rest, that were so avidly fostered by Africans in the past, and by post-modernists today. As such he deserves to be read by all concerned with the re-shaping of cultural and political institutions not only in contemporary Africa, but also in Europe, where the excesses of ethnonationalism and ethno-philosophy are reaching new heights.

*Jim MacLaughlin*

**The State, Economic Transformation and Political Change in the Philippines**

Amando Doronila, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1992 paperback, Stg£20

**A Captive Land: the Politics of Agrarian Reform in the Philippines**

James Putzel, London, Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1992, paperback Stg£12.99

**A Changeless Land: Continuity and Change in Philippine Politics**

David G. Timberman, New York, M.E. Sharpe; Singapore, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1991

One Filipino nationalist quoted by David Timberman declared that all attempts to bring about land reform in the Philippines were part of a plot

by the country's politicians to condemn the masses to "the idiocy of rural life". Only by industrialising could the Philippines rise above this idiocy, and ascend to the same lofty plane as neighbours such as Taiwan and Singapore – not to mention the US. A desperate desire to emulate the successes of the developed world, a palpable sense of economic and political inferiority, has afflicted this most intellectually-westernised of all Asian countries since independence. Yet the people of the Philippines, one of the most prosperous countries in the region during the 1950s, have seen their living standards gradually decline. As these three books amply demonstrate, the two decades of "kleptocracy" (government by theft) under Ferdinand Marcos – from 1965 to 1986 – are not in themselves sufficient to account for the calamitous problems facing this archipelago of 7,000 islands. The only Christian nation in Asia (approximately 85% Catholic), the Philippines were seen by the US as a showcase for democracy and enjoyed a considerable degree of self-government from 1935. Yet the outward trappings of representative government (president, constitution, bicameral legislature) coupled with widespread English-medium education were not in themselves sufficient. In the Philippines, it was far from self-evident that all men were created equal. The US failed to deal with the economic inequalities which were a legacy of Spanish rule, and which had left the bulk of land-holdings in the hands of a small elite class. Indeed as James Putzel shows, US land reform policies

during the colonial era had the effect of greatly exacerbating the extent of landlessness.

As the editor of the *Manila Chronicle* and a distinguished political commentator, Amando Doronila is well qualified to write with authority on the nature of the Philippine state. This book is a revised version of his 1982 Monash University MA thesis; in revising the thesis, he has shifted from examining the changing nature of patron-client relations (the subject of an oft-cited article he published in 1985)<sup>1</sup> to charting the emergence of an interventionist and autonomous Philippine state during the period from independence to Marcos' declaration of martial law. Doronila sets out explicitly to challenge the arguments of dependency theorists, whom he accuses of ignoring the role of the state as an autonomous actor. Doronila takes his cue from scholars such as Skocpol, who have called for the state to be re-examined as a central concern in political and economic analysis. The book is a spirited attempt to argue for this theoretical position, and is based mainly upon secondary sources.

There are two main difficulties with Doronila's argument. The first is that it already seems rather dated: the modernisation versus dependency debate has long since run out of steam, whilst, as Bob Taylor has noted of the recent US enthusiasm for "bringing the state back in – European students of politics were never aware that it had gone away."<sup>2</sup> Writing in 1964, David Wurfel observed that the Philippine presidency was far more powerful vis-

à-vis Congress than its US prototype, and argued that some future president might prove able to extend its powers still further.<sup>3</sup> As Doronila shows, this opportunity came about when an industrial bourgeoisie – which had achieved its wealth through the import substitution industrialisation strategy of the 1950s and 1960s – began to compete with the traditional landowning class for political power. President Marcos was the major beneficiary of this cleavage in the political elite.

This brings us to the second problem with Doronila's argument: is an increase in presidential power synonymous with the emergence of an autonomous, interventionist state? Whilst such innovations as the appointment of technocrats to key Cabinet posts (a process which began under President Magsaysay during the 1950s) may have been justified on the grounds that "the technocrats were seen to be the instruments to depoliticise the development process" (p.138), this "depoliticisation" itself served political ends. By taking policy-making out of the hands of potential opponents, successive presidents were shoring up power for themselves. Far from creating a neutral state structure which would serve the interests of the Philippine people without fear or favour, these changes paved the way for Marcos' 1972 declaration of martial law. Although Doronila declines to discuss Marcos' motives for the declaration – on the grounds that such analysis "belongs in part to the realm of psychology" – it seems indisputable that Marcos was primarily driven by a

personal hunger for power. As James Putzel persuasively argues in a book derived from his own Oxford doctoral thesis:

Under Marcos, the state did not become autonomous from society, but was rather captured by a small faction of old and new oligarchs. Marcos relied on a network of patronage stretching from Manila to the barrios to enforce his authoritarian rule. The state bureaucracy remained captive to societal interests. . . (p.374)

Amando Doronila has written an illuminating study, engagingly argued – yet ultimately his central proposition fails to convince. It is a pity that he did not update his work to deal with the demise of the Marcos regime, and with the Aquino period. Given the “weakness” of the Aquino democratic state noted by Doronila (p.178), perhaps the Philippine state never developed the institutional strength with which he credits it. For all its authoritarianism, for example, the Marcos regime never possessed an impressive capacity to tax Philippine citizens. Since the Armed Forces of the Philippines proved disloyal to both the Marcos and Aquino governments, could they properly be regarded as institutions of the state? The Philippine case amply demonstrates the difficulty of applying western-derived categories such as state and society or labels such as weak state or strong state to developing countries where empirical realities frequently confound theoretical models.

James Putzel's *A Captive Land* is unlikely to be surpassed as a study of agrarian reform in the Philippines. Putzel demonstrates a rare combination of theoretical rigour with meticulous original research. Not only has he combed through unpublished materials in government archives on both sides of the Pacific Ocean, but he has also carried out numerous interviews during the course of extensive fieldwork. Nor does he confine himself to discussing a single country: his early chapters describe in considerable detail the land reform programmes initiated in Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, the better to demonstrate the inadequacy of Philippine measures. Putzel distinguishes between radical liberal and conservative approaches to agrarian reform, arguing that conservative approaches have predominated in the Philippine case. In other words, reform has been seen as a means of shoring up existing inequalities, rather than a way of bringing about a more egalitarian Philippine society. Of particular interest is his work on the land reform measures introduced by the Aquino government, which perfectly illustrate the limitations of the President's political vision. Putzel's study proves what many have argued, but few have convincingly demonstrated: that Corazon Aquino had no higher ambition than to restore the Philippines to “elite democracy”, the pre-Marcos status quo ante.

Putzel has written a fine academic study; whether he has written a fine book is slightly more debatable. *A*

*Captive Land* retains the air of a thesis about it, right down to the numbered sub-sections with which every chapter abounds. In one sense, the author was fortunate in finding a publisher who was willing to bring out such a lengthy work in its entirety. Ultimately, however, he might have been better served by a more ruthless editor who had compelled him to pare down the earlier chapters, concentrating on the newer material. As it is, any reader who lacks the time or patience to read the whole book will find that each chapter is rounded off by a page or two of well-crafted summary and conclusion.

In his introduction to the curiously entitled *A Changeless Land*, David Timberman sets out to lower the expectations of his readers. Timberman declares: "This book is a highly synthetic work. I sift through and borrow from the observations and analysis of many people . . . . I make no pretences of offering a new tidy or all-encompassing model of Philippine politics" (p.xv).

Indeed, much of Timberman's book is little more than a synopsis of other people's books and articles. A good deal of the ground covered by Timberman has already been better surveyed by David Wurfel in his 1988 book *Filipino Politics: Development and Decay* (Cornell University Press). The strength of Timberman's book lies primarily in its later chapters on the early years of the Aquino regime, for this material is not readily accessible elsewhere. The book's extensive use of (un-numbered) sub-headings makes its

contents readily accessible to students seeking an introductory text on the country. If seen as a textbook rather than a research monograph, *A Changeless Land* has certain merits. However, the book is rather poorly written and singularly lacking in analytical energy and insight.

Recent political developments have made the Philippines one of the most fascinating countries in South-East Asia, although until recently one very little studied or understood in Europe. Whilst *A Captive Land* is far and away the best of the three books under review, each is, for different reasons, ultimately disappointing. I am eagerly awaiting a book which will combine the theoretical ambitions of Doronila with the meticulous research of Putzel, and the broad scope of Timberman. Such a book might succeed in linking an analysis of Philippine politics with a thorough explanation of the country's economic predicament. Only then will we come nearer to an intellectual grasp of this disturbing South-East Asian nation.

Duncan McCargo

#### Footnotes

1. Amanado Doronila, "The transformation of patron-client relations and its political consequences in the Philippines", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 16 March 1985, pp.99-116.
2. R. H. Taylor, "Political science and south east Asian studies", *South East Asia Research*, 1, 1 March 1993, p.9.
3. David Wurfel in George McT. Kahin (ed.) *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1964, p.724.

## **A Raw Deal**

written for Christian Aid by Peter Madden, London, 1992, 89pp, Stg£3.99

## **Fixing the Rules**

Kevin Watkins, Catholic Institute for International Relations, London, 1992, 144pp, Stg£6.99

## **Fair Trade**

Michael Barratt Brown, Zed Books, London, 1993, 226pp, npg.

Near the end of an adult education session on trade a participant spoke angrily about many of the views emerging in the discussion. The question for this person was: "What are the two members of my family who are employed in a synthetic fibre factory going to do if the current risk of closure due to imports endorsed by many of the ideas heard here goes ahead?"

It was a stark experience of the clash of the personal story with the global realities, of local demands versus the greater common good. The three books that I review here delve into this clash in a way that is illuminating and disturbing.

Of the three, Madden's *Raw Deal* is most accessible for the non-professional economist. The issues of unfair trade causing problems of injustice and poverty are each covered in a clear introductory fashion. All the issues covered are supported by pertinent examples from the developing countries. In particular for the educator, having relevant and current examples at hand is a valuable

resource when exploring an issue.

Throughout there are fresh concepts and challenging questions. In the first chapter he describes trade in the lives of people in the developing world as a question of "livelihood rather than lifestyle", suggesting that if we were more aware of the producer we might decide to choose differently when buying goods. Madden poses the question: "Why trade?" If developing countries are doing so badly on world trading why do they not withdraw from it? He argues that they might be self-sufficient in food but they would be "unable to produce medicine, fuel, and machinery". In reality trading in many countries is not for importation of other goods but to finance debts to overseas banks and institutions mainly on the North. This link between the need for trade to pay off existing loans is poorly developed.

As the author later points out the question is not whether to trade but what kind of trade? He suggests trade that will provide well paid jobs in good conditions to learn skills; provide exports to help fund health and community development projects; play a positive part in helping communities and countries to develop. He cites an example of a project funded by Christian Aid in Bangladesh, with a good supporting photograph.

In general terms Christian Aid policy suggests that fairer trading requires:

- helpful economic policies within nations, and
- a favourable international environment.

These terms are quite broad but fail to cover certain issues, e.g. the need to monitor closely the role of TNCs (transnational corporations) discussed in a latter chapter. Here he discusses the role of TNCs with supporting examples and statistics. Sierra Leone is taken as a case study, quoting UNDP that it now has the worst standard of living in the world, with 70% of the people in absolute poverty, yet it has rich deposits of bauxite, rutile and diamonds which have been exploited by TNCs and, although not mentioned in the book, by the former coloniser, Britain. Madden suggests that "Third World countries need TNCs but often get a bad deal". It seems that this is a topic for debate, as it could be like turkeys voting for Christmas.

For the study of TNCs there are good photographs and a table which shows their market share in world primary commodity trade (p.46). I have used this table a number of times to focus on the concentration of power among the TNCs and found it very clear and concise.

The treatment of free trade zones is particularly good in that it deals with exploitation at the national level, and also the exploitation of women workers. Many developing countries have set up free trade zones to attract TNCs because of the accruing investment of finance, skills and technology. In the long term the hosting country also suffers negative effects from employing women on low wages and in bad conditions: "women were locked in for 23 hours out of 24 and given amphetamines to increase production". There are the

other side effects of companies failing to use local materials or become part of the local economy and the overhanging threat of the company leaving when the tax free era has expired.

This book while it draws on the experiences of a particular agency throughout is global in the examples it gives. It makes recommendations to the Irish and UK governments for furthering the process of change by challenging protectionism in the EU, providing greater compensation to developing economies, and encouraging stricter and more just global regulation of trade. There is one Irish contact address among the listed fair trade organisations.

*Fixing the Rules* is a more focused book; its theme is the history, difficulties, and recent developments of GATT. It gives a good outline of the tasks that face the Director General of GATT, Peter Sutherland, who was appointed since it was published.

In this detailed but readable book Watkins is frank about double standards in the North. The governments of the North advocate greater democracy for the South, while at the international level those with economic power dominate. GATT, he says, is a good example of such double standards. The negotiations for the recent eighth round, the Uruguay Round, appeared to come down to the big players, the EU, US and Japan.

Among the factors that will create even greater divisions between South and North are: the

concentration of research and development in the North, and new GATT based intellectual property rules which include control over patents. The major actors in this are the US-based Intellectual Property Coalition, a group of thirteen companies "including IBM, Du Pont and General Motors", and "European agro-chemical giants such as Unilever, Hoechst and Ciba Geigy". In effect they want to install rules which would increase their monopoly on patents and lengthen the life-span of the patent. They also want a patent system on genetic resources "thus raising the prospect of life itself becoming private corporate property".

Watkins has a good summary of the history of GATT which was part of the post World War II mechanisms that began in Bretton Woods in 1944 (are there good reasons to celebrate their 50 years of existence?) In Chapter Three Watkins focuses on the participation of developing countries in GATT. While the mechanisms to give equal treatment to each member exist and each country has one vote, in practice developing countries "are like extras on the GATT stage: the show can't go on without them, but nobody is remotely interested in what they have to say". By "nobody" the author presumably means the few economically strong players of the North.

In covering environmental issues in development education Watkins makes some important points. The need for GATT to reverse the current

subsidisation process must clearly distinguish between subsidisation in the North of "ecologically devastating forms of intense agriculture" and subsidies in the South to support self-sufficiency, to maintain rural employment and "encourage ecologically sustainable production systems".

The author highlights the lethal combination for the environment of debt-repayment obligations and falling commodity prices. To survive, many countries have to over-exploit fragile ecological bases, sacrificing long-term sustainability for short-term trade gains.

Watkins looks towards UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development) to be a voice for developing countries in global negotiations on the environmental aspects of GATT. The reality of the Earth Summit in Rio yet again showed that good ideas, as Watkins suggests, get pushed to the sideline. But the truth of them, like many of the insights of this readable study, inspires the struggle for awareness and discussion to continue.

While graphically less appealing than either of the other two books, this is a detailed and relatively up to date document on GATT. For current information one has to keep a close eye for the meagre reporting that many significant developments in the GATT talks receive in our news media.

Michael Barratt Brown begins *Fair Trade* on the international trading system by stating that "nothing distresses a child more than to feel that something is unfair and as we get



older the feeling that things in the world are unfair becomes a haunting preoccupation. Whether we are among the unfortunate ones or the lucky ones we ask why this should be so."

This is good summary of the essence of what we aim to achieve in development education. Throughout the book the author addresses world trading inequalities and traces their origin back to the invasion by many European countries of what is now termed South America. Brown presents the information on colonisation in an original way, drawing on many sources such as art, religion, history to document his many illustrations, including Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

Between 1521 and 1660 the Spanish government fleet brought back over 200 tons of gold and 18,000 tons of silver, after melting down precious objects of art and worship. They also enslaved people in mines to maintain this supply. Cheap labour was needed and this initiated trading in people; slavery became big business. He points out that a benchmark in art history was created by the Flemish painter, Rubens, the last famous classical painter who depicted one of the kings of the Orient as "a splendidly bejewelled black African". The slave trade changed this image and also the status of the black person from that of an equal to one of slave and inferior being. A poster of that painting would make an excellent focus for many topics in a development education session.

Another fundamental question which Brown asks is: why did

Europeans create colonies? Why us and not them? He proposes that the slave trade and an unequal exchange of manufactured goods for raw materials was instrumental, but, not the cause (p.16). Rather, he presents the argument that the Europeans challenged restrictions on the free working of markets and the centralised power of the state or government to control trade. Brown suggests that because Europeans achieved this power first they were then in a better position to hold on to it. As I read this the parallels with present day multinational companies came to mind. In particular their self-appointed role of moving trade from one country to another for their profit motives.

Once trading opened up the follow-on was colonialism – owning the land to ensure a steady supply of raw materials and more markets. Brown cites an example pertinent to the current "Stop the Stitch Up Campaign". Bangladesh was exporting millions of pounds worth of cotton goods each year in the 1750's yet within 60 years their exports had ceased and "they were importing cloth from British factories using increasingly as their raw material cotton from India" (p.18). Colonisers were exporting the Bangladeshi cotton to Britain. Again the parallels with the current situation with the Multifibre Arrangement looms large; Bangladesh textiles are subject to quotas in order to protect the European industry.

Brown sets the background for the takeover by the Europeans and says "in this they were encouraged by

their religion . . . in believing they were created to increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it”, and we still can be accused of having a wholly Eurocentric view that all development must follow the European model.

The author discusses the trail of destruction, exploitation and inequality arising from colonialism. The evidence is, that at times, the third world improves its portion by getting the better prices for primary products, but, very quickly slumps again. Some of the cycles last longer than others, some covering a span of fifty years. It appears that each of the long cycles can be associated with major technological advances from the time of steam power in 1860, electric power, the internal combustion engine to electronics and computers in the 1960s. Each cycle also brings a new set of countries achieving greater industrialisation with the present day focus on South Korea, Taiwan, with Brazil and Mexico on their way.

Brown explains how the clearly defined lines between producers, traders, and retailers become faded when under the controlling power of multinational companies. Table 5 shows the Corporate Control of Global Commodity Trade and Table 10 the Major Food Traders and Processors 1980 and while dated are useful summaries.

Some of the alternative trading ideas may be difficult for the average consumer. As the book title suggests, Brown advocates fairer trade, (very different to so called free trade) not out of mercy or sympathy but out of

a sense of justice. He refers to and explains many of the market regulating systems. He says of the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy): “the total cost of farm support is equal to twice the farmers’ incomes in the year, and 80% of CAP goes to 20% of the farmers in the EU, and those are not the poorest ones.” GATT in the final stage of another round of trade negotiations, is reviewing further liberalisation of the world food trade. Proposals were made for eliminating subsidies and reducing levies. Brown points out that the negotiations have led to a war of words between US and EU over who was being most unfair in the subsidy support to their farmers.

How can the third world get fairer trade? As chairperson of TWIN (Third World Information Network), Brown suggests the answer lies in small producer associations and co-ops. He suggests co-operation between small countries, to present a common front to MNCs, and where possible countertrade. This is exchange of goods which does not involve money payment. Aid agencies have encouraged countertrade where the aid has been equipment and the producer pays in part with exports. Like any system it has its difficulties, particularly in the area of time lapse between the supply of goods.

Another system being used is international trading certificates, “which can be transferred from one trader to another giving rights to market goods of a certain value, provided that the certificates have been endorsed by a central bank or other recognised authority.” These

examples are functioning around the world but Brown suggests there is a need to establish a better basis of exchange between first and third worlds, in effect between producers and consumers.

Many of the new initiatives in alternative trading have evolved from attempts by first world charities to go beyond a "charity" response to famine. Alternative trading aims to create a more honest relationship between producer and consumer, their conditions of work, life, wages and how the production affects the environment. This system is based on the principles of "equality, fair exchange, reciprocal benefits, mutual respect, and the avoidance of corrupt practices".

*Just Enterprise* is a new pack for schools produced by Traidcraft exchange which Brown recommends for its introduction to the "Third World" and "developing an awareness of love and justice" in business practices (p.161). From my own experience of this pack I can concur. It is more suitable for 14-18 year olds than for adult groups, as it is geared for the school curriculum. Already many new trading initiatives have begun, and a list of producers and their products is given on p.160, including a wide range from Indian

tea (in a caddy from Archana) to Tanzanian honey.

Brown suggests taking courage from the success of the Green Movement in creating environmental awareness in the 1970s and 80s. He also refers to the power of the consumer in changing the labelling system, "what used to be called 'food fads' are now taken seriously. Food products frequently carry the information on the packaging that they contain no artificial additives". A boycott campaign in the US has led to the commitment of Burger King not to buy rainforest beef. The proposed Fair Trade symbol is on p.183 and Brown reports that while large companies are interested, many see it as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Each of these books is useful as background for anyone trying to come to grips with these complex but very pertinent issues. For those of us involved in education in the formal or non-formal sector they also give extensive information, present many different concepts and challenging questions. However the skill or methodology necessary to present this material experimentally is not to be found in these volumes.

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