

"protection rackets," which thrived on gambling and prostitution near Clark Air Force Base in Angeles, Pampanga. A few Huks reportedly became wealthy this way. Some even began to hobnob with prominent politicians and landlords in Central Luzon.

Scattered bands of revolutionaries, social bandits, and thieves were the only signs of rebellion in Central Luzon by late 1956. Most Huks had returned to eking out a living as tenants and laborers. They expected at least to live in peace now, free from marauding soldiers and civilian guards. Many also immediately joined peasant organizations. Given the choice between using legal and illegal political methods, they preferred the former. They generally had throughout their long struggle. Conditions now seemed to offer that choice again. Their struggle was not over, they said. It had just entered another phase.

'For
Rural Patro
développement
'Progress' in South'

From: Benedict J. Kerkvliet. The Huk Rebellion. Quezon City, 1979.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSION

THE CONTRAST between Central Luzon in the early 1930s and Central Luzon in the early 1950s is both startling and understandable. It is startling because no one would have predicted that by 1950 thousands of armed peasants would have organized themselves to fight government authorities and their armed forces. And no one would have guessed that several thousand more peasants would be actively supporting these armed rebels through an elaborate network linking one barrio and town to the next. Certainly no villager in 1930 would have imagined such an outcome. The situation by the 1950s is striking, too, because the extent of peasant organization and the degree of peasant unity for political action contrast so starkly with earlier decades. In twenty years, peasant society in Central Luzon changed from having virtually no horizontal political organization to forming large peasant unions and rebelling.

On the other hand, Central Luzon's peasant movement and the Huk rebellion are understandable. Explaining why has been the purpose of this study. The explanation, however, has been neither easily made nor simply put. And undoubtedly there remains more to learn about this revolt. But by now several themes should be clear. A central cause was the disintegration of the traditional landlord-tenant relationship in an area where cash crop cultivation was intense and relied almost exclusively on the tenancy system. Peasants tried to compensate for this fundamental change, but their options were few and inadequate. Tenants also vigorously tried to maintain the traditional system by holding landlords accountable for services usually provided; and they became increasingly organized, pressing for reforms in the tenancy system. These efforts failed either to resurrect the dying system or to satisfy villagers' minimum needs. Any short-term gains they made were typically negated or proved meaningless. Meanwhile, reactions of the government and landed elites became increasingly hostile and violent. Although they conceded a few palliatives, the government and the landed were unsympathetic to the peasants' plight. Organized protest gradually became organized rebellion, primarily as a consequence of the government's and landed elites' repression. From late 1946 to the early 1950s, the Huk rebellion dominated Central Luzon.

In this final section, I would like to emphasize conclusions which are significant, first, for what they say about this particular rebellion. Some of them alter the previous scholarship on the Huk movement. Second, these conclusions are important for what they might say about other peasant revolts in the "Third World" during the twentieth century. My reading of the literature on this subject leads me to believe that the revolt in Central Luzon has parallels elsewhere.¹ Consequently, the conclusions elaborated here may contribute to a general understanding of why and how peasants rebel, although I have no illusions that these cover all cases or that they form a comprehensive framework for studying other rebellions.

The sources I have used in this study permitted an analysis from the peasantry's perspective and an appreciation of what the rebellion meant to villagers. I am satisfied that my analysis shows beyond a reasonable doubt that persons who joined and supported peasant organizations of the 1930s and 1940s as well as the Huk rebellion itself were rational human beings reacting to major political and economic changes, which had brought them unbearable hardship. Standing back now and looking at the whole rebellion and the movement supporting it, I see eight conclusions for discussion. They concern the long-term causes of peasant unrest, the justifications people had for their protest and revolt, the peasants' moderate goals, the preludes to rebellion, the consequences of repression, the three types of leaders in peasant movements, the significance of colonialism for understanding revolt, and the meaning of "a rebellion that failed."

I. A major cause for the unrest was the dramatic deterioration of traditional ties between local elites and peasants. Peasants rebelled not because they were poor and weak while large landowners were wealthy and strong. Traditional rural society in Central Luzon—and so many other parts of Southeast Asia—had been that way for a long time. Rather, a major reason for discontent was that the ties, which previously had bound together the rich and the poor, broke. As a consequence, peasants not only remained poor—and in many cases poorer—but now they were also cut off from people who had provided valuable protection and assistance.]

Ties between local elites and peasants had formed what can be called traditional patron-client relationships. Because owning land that other people farmed was a measure of status in Central Luzon—and in many traditional societies—frequently the patrons were landowners (with big patrons being the big landowners). Their clients were those on whom they relied to work the land and do a variety of other services. In short, the typical patron was a landlord, and the typical client was a tenant farmer. But even small landowners frequently had patrons to whom they were loyal and gave services in return for protection (perhaps even protection against

¹ For some of these parallels, see James C. Scott and Benedict J. Kerkvliet, "How Traditional Rural Patrons Lose Legitimacy: A Theory with Special Reference to Southeast Asia," *Cultures et développement*, vol. 5, no. 3 (1973):501-540, and "The Politics of Survival: Peasant Response to 'Progress' in Southeast Asia," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 4 (September 1973):241-268.

others making claims on their land), sponsorship at weddings and baptisms, and financial assistance during hard times.

In addition to being a relationship between unequal, traditional patron-client ties had, judging from Central Luzon, three important characteristics. First, ties between patron and client were numerous, diffuse, and flexible. Indeed, these qualities were a primary source of the relationship's strength as far as clients were concerned, for they could call on their patrons for a wide range of assistance. In this way, a patron became each client's all-inclusive superior, principal source of assistance, and last resort when all other things failed. At the same time, the nature of the relationship allowed a patron wide latitude in what he could ask from each client. Over time, therefore, the relationship became complex, and its complexity became its strength. Second, the patron-client relationship was a personal, face-to-face one. This was an important way to keep the ties diffuse and flexible and prevent the relationship from becoming too specific and rigid. Third, the relationship was based not on compulsion or force but on reciprocity. Because of structural conditions, each party had something that the other needed. For landlords, these conditions included a relative scarcity of peasants to farm their lands and do supplementary work. For villagers, the conditions were a need for land to till and the inability of kinship and the village community to provide sufficient protection against crop failures and other hardships. For both, the relative absence of effective impersonal guarantees such as public law for security of family and property was also an important reason for the development of patron-client bonds. In order to get what the other had, land-owners and villagers each had to give something that was considered fair. Hence, theirs was a symbiotic relationship in which expectations and obligations grew through practice and personal interaction.

It would be erroneous, of course, to give the impression that years ago life was rosy for tenant farmers in Central Luzon and other areas where ties between lord and peasant were paternalistic. On the contrary. Villagers in San Ricardo told me matter-of-factly about their struggle to turn wild grasslands and forests into vegetable plots and rice fields. Peasants in Central Luzon had to work hard the year around just to keep their heads above water. Like most peasants in the world, their perennial problem was to satisfy their families' needs and their obligations to other villagers and the community as a whole while at the same time paying rent, doing work, and fulfilling obligations to landlords and others of higher status beyond the village.² They rarely had any surplus from their labors. And they lived about as close to the margin of bare subsistence as one could get without starving.

Meanwhile, landlords like General Manuel Tinio—the small minority at the top of the social pyramid—lived in big houses, wore nice clothes, employed servants, and ate very well. And sometimes they abused their

² For a succinct and influential elaboration of this generalization, see Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), pp. 1-17, 60-95.

relationships with peasants by making illegitimate demands and using force to compel tenants to comply with their wishes.

Two important points to keep in mind, however, are these: First, force was not the normal means to maintain traditional ties between landlords and villagers. Landlords needed peasants who were loyal, not peasants who were simply being forced to obey.¹ A loyal following was a basic part of the patron's status and political power in the locality.² Second, their landlords' paternalism was precisely one vital means for peasants to keep their heads above water.³ A strong patron-client relationship was a kind of all-encompassing insurance policy whose coverage, although not total and infinitely reliable, was as comprehensive as a poor family could get. Consequently, what peasants did for landlords was balanced off, in their eyes, by what landlords did for them.⁴ This balance of exchange made the relationship legitimate and just, as far as villagers were concerned, however exploitative it might seem to those on the outside.⁵

Due to land scarcity, large population growth, commercial markets, and other changes in the conditions that had shaped patron-client relations, the traditional balance of exchange went awry.⁶ Moreover, this happened quickly, within only a few decades. Had such changes been spread across several centuries, as they were in some other parts of the world, perhaps people in Central Luzon's villages could have coped somehow or would have protested only sporadically and individually or in small groups.

The new conditions allowed local elites to be less dependent on personal followings. More specifically, landlords no longer needed tenants as clients. They simply needed them as workers. They wanted, therefore, to reduce to a minimum their dealings with tenants as people, preferring an employer-employee relationship in which all terms of employment were carefully spelled out and wages were as low as possible in order to maximize profits. Increasingly, large landowners wanted tenants only because there was no other way to farm their lands. Had it been possible, many would have preferred, as Manolo Tinio of Talavera, Nueva Ecija, did, to have machines rather than people work their lands.⁷

Villagers, meanwhile, needed traditional patronage more than ever, lest they succumb not only to such usual hazards as poor harvests or sicknesses, but also to new ones (such as being evicted from their land) resulting from the rapid changes themselves. Most tenants did not even benefit from the expanding market for the crops they grew for the landowners. Peasants who cultivated rice, for example, did not prosper from the expanding rice industry. Rarely did a tenant working for landlords like Manolo Tinio have any surplus to sell. Indeed, few had enough left after sharing with their landowners to feed their own families. Consequently, most had to borrow at interest rates that kept going higher.

2. The second conclusion is that protesting and rebellious villagers believed their actions were justified. Expressed in terms of local problems, their justifications addressed such basic political issues as justice, human rights, and the distribution of resources and wealth. The bases for their

claims were local customs and their understanding of decent human behavior. Previously the elites themselves had supported these customs and standards of morality, but now they refused to.

Simply stated, peasants justified their actions in the 1930s and 1940s on the basis that the landed elites had violated customary obligations to the poor—the “little people,” in the villagers’ vocabulary. The violations were grave in two respects. First, they were not just occasional lapses affecting a few persons here and there. Rather, they persisted over a number of years and made life significantly more precarious for thousands of villagers in the region. Second, rural elites failed to uphold not just the peripheral and weaker obligations, but also the major ones. It was bad enough, according to peasants in Central Luzon, that landlords increasingly stopped providing pigs and chickens for barrio fiestas, moved out of the villages to live in towns and cities, refused to sponsor their tenants’ weddings and baptisms, or forbade tenants to take grain home for their chickens. It was intolerable, however, when landlords began to evict tenants from the land or refused to allow them a large enough share of the harvest to feed their families. From the peasants’ point of view, the landlords’ most serious transgression was to quit giving “rations” and interest-free loans of rice to those who had no more of their own to eat.⁸ To deny rations and loans was tantamount to forcing them to borrow from thick-skinned moneylenders or starve, if not one year then some other year, because inevitably times came when peasants needed to borrow or else not eat.

Rations, certainly, and interest-free loans, probably, were a peasant family’s guarantee from their landlord that they could subsist even if their own crop failed. The traditional patron-client relationship obligated the landed elites to guarantee subsistence to peasants working on their lands. Beginning around the 1920s, however, landlords refused. Meanwhile, it was obvious to peasants that most landlords had enough to share with the peasants. They saw many prosper from rice and sugar sales. As far as peasants could tell, therefore, landlords denied the traditional guarantees to subsistence not because they themselves had nothing left to share with villagers but because they no longer wanted to fulfill their obligations. Meanwhile, landlords continued to demand services and rent from their tenants. The previous balance of exchange had become so unbalanced that peasants now felt exploited. Just as they knew when the relationship with their patrons was satisfactory and hence legitimate, so too they knew when the exchange was unbalanced and illegitimate.

The other major justification peasants stated was that they had a right to defend themselves against the abuses and repression of landlords, armed guards, government officials, and soldiers. Furthermore, peasants felt obligated to avenge the mistreatment and murder of relatives and friends who had been victims of landlord and government immorality and lawlessness. On these grounds, peasants justified the Huks’ violence against the elites and their armies and looked on the rebels as their own instrument of justice.

It is significant that peasants defended their actions largely in terms of what they considered right and just. Landlords and the government had wronged them; they had treated them unfairly and had violated norms which peasants still regarded as binding. Without this understanding one cannot fully appreciate the rational basis for the peasantry's actions. It is not enough to know, for example, that landlords took 50 or 55 percent of the harvests, that they charged interest on loans, that they did not give rations, that they hired armed guards, that government soldiers arrested peasant union leaders, and so on. One needs to know the cultural context for these facts.³

3. Peasant demands were moderate, not radical. Villagers wanted to reform the tenancy system, not eliminate it and appropriate the landlords' lands for themselves. Indeed, the basic objective shared by most peasants who were striking, marching, and rebelling during the 1930s and 1940s was to regain the economic and political security that the traditional tenancy system had previously provided. Consequently, they demanded that landlords live up to their obligations as traditional partons—give rations, give loans without charging interest, guarantee tenants a parcel of land to use for life, increase the tenants' share of the harvest, and stop using armed guards or calling out the Philippine Constabulary against them. Growing out of this struggle were other issues, such as the peasants' right to organize and have their own unions. Even villagers in the Huk rebellion had only moderate aims. In addition to the agrarian reforms they had been talking about before, the rebels in Central Luzon wanted an end to the repression against peasant organization members, former Hukbalahap guerrillas, and villagers in general. They were not rebelling in hopes of overthrowing the government or establishing a revolutionary political system.

Of course, there were exceptions to this generalization. Some in the peasant organizations and Huk movement wanted to take or buy their landlords' lands. Similarly, some villagers believed that toppling the governments of presidents Roxas and Quirino was the only chance peasants had to alleviate their problems. In addition to these exceptions among the peasantry, leaders in the PKM, PKP, and HMB who were not themselves from the peasantry often advocated land redistribution, a socialist economic system, and other radical programs.

What is so striking, however, is that these people were a minority. The radical visions of the few did not become the movement's visions. The movement grew, and it moved from unrest and protest to rebellion. Yet the issues and goals remained as modest in the late 1940s and 1950s as they had been in the 1930s. This was one important reason why the govern-

³ For a brilliant essay that argues the importance of "moral indignation" for understanding political unrest in many contexts, see Peter A. Lupsha's "Explanation of Political Violence: Some Psychological Theories versus Indignation," *Politics and Society* 2 (fall 1971):89-104. I am also impressed with George Rude's discussion of related ideas in *The Crowd in History* (New York: Wiley, 1964).

ment's own moderate reforms of the 1950s had a deadening effect on the Huk rebellion.

Why were peasants content to demand so little? Why, for example, did so few peasants demand that they, rather than their landlords, own the lands they farmed? Some remarks to supplement what has already been said may provide a clearer answer. The first is to ask, why would we expect peasants to demand their own land? Certainly there is no inherent reason for tenants to claim the land they till. Typically what is crucial for peasants is the right to subsistence living from the produce of the land, not a legal title itself. To go a little further, one must consider the matter of justification. Based on village culture, peasants in Central Luzon could amply support their claims that rents should be reduced, they had a right to farm the owners' lands, landlords should pay a fair share of the agricultural expenses, landlords should provide tenants with minimum subsistence, and so on. But nothing in their tradition justified taking land for themselves. Their situation was not one in which they had been suddenly alienated from land they thought was theirs to own. (This was true only for some peasants in those parts of Central Luzon where larger landowners grabbed the lands of homesteaders and small landowners). Rather, it was a situation in which they had been alienated from agrarian elites on whom they thought they had a right to make certain claims. The deterioration of the traditional relations was so recent that peasants in Central Luzon remembered well the paternalistic system. Remnants of patron-client bonds sometimes remained. Consequently, peasants felt that there was a chance to reestablish them.

Other studies have demonstrated that peasants generally try to maximize their security and minimize their risks. Villagers in Central Luzon did the same. The traditional tenancy system, which many peasants in the region either had experienced personally or had known through their parents and grandparents, had provided security and minimized risks. Owning land would not necessarily mean fewer hazards or more safety. Indeed, peasants might well have feared the reverse. Owning land could pose even greater risks—such as having to carry the burden of all expenses for a crop that could easily fail if drought or blight hit. Owning land could also be less secure than tenancy—it implied having only weak or no claims on wealthy persons for rations and loans and no protection against land-grabbers. One possibility would have been for peasants to consider a thorough revolution in which landlords and other elites were stripped of their power once and for all, thereby eliminating many dangers which otherwise might threaten small landowners. But this undertaking in itself was such a gigantic risk that it was scarcely thinkable in the 1930s through the 1950s. There remained other, less dangerous possibilities, including efforts to reconstruct good patron-client relationships with landed elites.

Previous studies, for the most part, have portrayed the Huk movement as being more radical than my findings would allow. Several books frequently cited for their treatment of the rebellion have argued that the Huks wanted to redistribute land and they were revolutionaries who sought

to replace the country's government with a communist regime.⁴ At the same time, none of these studies discusses the villagers' desire to regain a disappearing relationship with their former patrons. Usually this important point is also absent in interpretations of Philippine history by Filipino leftists.⁵ As has been noted, some within the movement, particularly certain leaders, did have a radical vision for the rebellion. It so happens that previous studies have relied heavily on information from these more radical participants in the movement. Or they have used information that the Philippine or United States government has supplied, which almost invariably portrays—often without evidence—the Huks as revolutionaries. These studies, in short, generally have emphasized perspectives other than those of villagers involved in the movement.

4. A fourth conclusion is that long before they rebelled, peasants tried a variety of ways to cope with the drastically changing agrarian conditions and to demand reforms. Rebellion was a last resort after other efforts had failed.

This is another point that previous studies on the Huk rebellion have ignored for the most part. Despite the publication of Luis Taruc's *Born of the People*, whose initial chapters describe the unrest in Central Luzon prior to the revolt, most studies have talked about the rebellion as if it were a sudden explosion of discontent. They scarcely mention the tumultuous decade or more of agrarian unrest prior to the Japanese occupation.⁶ This

⁴ Uldarico S. Baclagon, *Lessons from the Huk Campaign in the Philippines* (Manila: M. Colcol, 1960); Fred H. Barton, *Salient Operational Aspects of Paramilitary Warfare in Three Asian Areas* (Washington, D.C.: Operations Research Office, Technical Memorandum ORO-T-228, Department of the Army, 1954); Jose M. Crisol, *The Red Line* (Manila: Barangay Pocketbook, 1954); Louis F. Felder, *Socio-Economic Aspects of Counterinsurgency: A Case Study—Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1963); Eduardo Lachica, *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt* (Manila: Solidaridad, 1971); Richard M. Leighton, Ralph Sanders, and Jose N. Tinio, *The Huk Rebellion: A Case Study in the Social Dynamics of Insurrection* (Washington, D.C.: Industrial College of the Armed Forces, 1964); Alfredo B. Saulo, *Communism in the Philippines: An Introduction* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1969); Alvin H. Scraft, *The Philippine Answer to Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955); Napoleon D. Valeriano and Charles T. R. Bohannan, *Counter-Guerrilla Operations: The Philippine Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1962).

⁵ See, for example, Amado Guerrero, *Philippine Society and Revolution* (Manila: Pulang Tala, 1971).

⁶ See, for instance, two of the better-known books on the Huk rebellion: Lachica, *Huk*, and Scraft, *The Philippine Answer to Communism*. Although Lachica's book does mention some of the important social and economic conditions, it says little about the peasant organizations and unrest during the 1930s and immediately following the Japanese occupation. To the extent it does mention these, it places heavy and, in my judgment, undue emphasis on the skillfulness of leaders in arousing peasants to act. And when it discusses social and economic conditions, it speaks almost exclusively about the province of Pampanga. A major thesis of the book is that the Huk rebellion was mainly a Pampangan movement. As for Scraft's study, the book makes practically no mention of peasant unrest prior to the Japanese occupation and has no serious discussion of the PKM, Democratic Alliance, and other important aspects of the peasant movement after 1945.

characterization has reinforced the image frequently presented in government accounts that peasants in Central Luzon are an impatient and rowdy bunch. And it has contributed to the notion that Filipino peasants are docile except when they occasionally become hot-headed and explode into an uncontrollable rage. Frequently accompanying such ideas is the claim that "outside agitators"—usually communists—came in and stirred up the quiet countryside until it became a storm of discontent.

My analysis suggests the opposite. Rather than being docile, peasants in Central Luzon were aggressive toward landlords and government officials once they concluded that they were being exploited. But rather than being quick to revolt, peasants tried every possible avenue before resorting to organized violence. Finally, neither the Huk rebellion itself nor the peasant unrest preceding it resulted from outsiders coming into the villagers to start trouble. This revolt's history suggests that such an idea has dubious validity for any peasant movement. When a few Huks tried to export their rebellion to other parts of the Philippines—for example, to the Bisayas and Northern Luzon regions—they failed, apparently because they were outsiders themselves and the political conditions were not bad enough from the viewpoint of villagers there to warrant revolt.

Two themes should be highlighted here to develop this point about rebellion coming at the end of a long struggle. The first is that peasants in Central Luzon turned to collective, public actions the more they realized that alternatives for either coping with or escaping new hardships were unsatisfactory. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, dissatisfied peasants could move from one area to another in search of better landlords. Or they could move to virgin lands, maybe even homestead and become small landowners. Such mobility continued into the 1940s, but the relief it brought declined markedly. Several villagers, for example, had moved to Talavera, Nueva Ecija, in the 1920s and 1930s from Bulacan. They had left Bulacan because their landlords had become strict and unjust; they hoped to find "decent" and "good" landlords in Nueva Ecija. They never did. Many peasants moved several times, from one hacienda to another in an endless pursuit of fair tenancy conditions. Eventually they realized through their own experiences and those of others that bad conditions permeated the region. Meanwhile, population growth had taken its toll on virgin land, to say nothing of financial, legal, and bureaucratic obstacles confronting a peasant family who wanted its own land. Homesteading, in particular, was a realistic hope for only a tiny few. Peasants also tried to adjust by finding work in towns and cities, supplementing agricultural work with odd jobs in the vicinity of their home villages, eating less, and changing their diets (such as substituting cheaper root crops for rice and eating little or no fish or poultry). As one elderly woman in San Ricardo, Talavera, described her family's efforts to survive in the 1930s, they simply "suffered through as best as possible."

Some people did find landowners—typically ones owning only a few hectares—who were less strict and more traditional about their relations with tenants. A small number of peasants even managed to buy a little bit

of land in remote parts of Nueva Ecija and Tarlac. Some others became carpenters and day laborers in Cabanatuan, San Fernando, and other towns in Central Luzon. In these ways, a few managed to escape the worst. But most did not. The changes were too sweeping and there were too many people, too few jobs, too little land, and too many obstacles for the majority of Central Luzon's villagers to make do by relying only on normal efforts to adjust.

The other important theme here is that the unrest prior to rebellion took several forms and was a period during which peasants learned the necessity of collective action. Peasants expressed their discontent in various ways. They secretly harvested the fields in order to take what they regarded as rightfully theirs even though the landlords' new regulations called this cheating and stealing. They had strikes, sometimes against just one landlord and other times against all landlords for miles around. They petitioned mayors, governors, congressmen, and presidents. They marched and demonstrated in small groups and large. They took landlords and sugar central owners to court. They even ran candidates for municipal offices and for congress. And in a few significant instances, their candidates were elected. They left no avenues unexplored as they sought to air their grievances and make their demands.

Incidents at the local level were both peaceful and violent. The latter included, for instance, peasants committing arson and attacking the property and persons of the local elites and officials. As the arena of protest widened, shifting from the village to a nearby town or capital city, and as the number of persons in any one incident grew larger, the activities tended to be more peaceful. In part this was because large numbers of violent people would cause more alarm and provoke more violent retaliation from the elites and government. It was also assuredly easier to get large numbers of people to demonstrate peacefully than to storm a government building. Finally, as the size of the arena grew, the movement was linked at the top to intellectuals and politicians who were much more familiar with the range of legitimate avenues and how to use them than those at the base of the movement. Indeed, the peasantry frequently learned about legal recourses and petitioning lawmakers from these leaders, who in turn tried to steer the movement away from local violence and toward peaceful protest.

The avenues of nonviolent protest were more numerous in the Philippines during the 1930s and 1940s than they probably are in many countries. Consequently, the prelude to rebellion in this case may have been more prolonged than would be possible for peasants in most countries. Nevertheless, the general point is that peasants exhaust their recourses before they rebel.

As peasants began to act publicly, they increasingly learned that they experienced many common problems and became acutely aware of the necessity to join together in order to achieve provincial or national influence. Before peasants from several villages or haciendas—or even peasants working on the same hacienda—would join together in public protest, they had to perceive that they shared problems. Historically, this

had been rare. Peasant society in the Philippines, as elsewhere, was divided along religious, geographical, and linguistic lines. No inherent reason drove villagers to act together or possess a sense of class consciousness that could be translated into collective action. Even farming for the same landlord did not necessarily create bonds among tenants. Because each peasant typically dealt with his landlord individually, the tenants of a single landlord could each have distinct arrangements. As the traditional system deteriorated, however, relations between a landlord and his tenants became increasingly uniform, a fact best illustrated in Central Luzon by the fading personalism and the growing prevalence of written, highly specific contracts that peasants had to sign. The modern market economy was indeed creating a "class" of persons who shared similar working conditions. As this became apparent to peasants themselves, organizing began to make sense.

Even with the increasing awareness of shared experience, however, numerous obstacles hampered collective action. Remaining ties between peasants and local elites, for example, hindered the formation of peasant organizations. Some villagers tried to survive these hard times precisely by ingratiating themselves with local elites and doing whatever was asked of them, even if it meant fighting other villagers. Consequently landlords, sugar central owners, and local officials could recruit poor people to be strikebreakers, hacienda guards, and soldiers. Appropriate illustrations of these were the Cawal ng Capayapaan (Knights of Peace) strikebreakers in the 1930s and the civilian guards in the 1940s. Many of the confrontations in Central Luzon during the agrarian unrest and the HMB rebellion had poor people on both sides. "Little people" in the peasant movement clashed with other "little people" used by landlords and the government.

Working to the peasantry's advantage were preexisting ties among fellow villagers, extended families, and people who had worked each other's fields. In several parts of Central Luzon, customary arrangements for mutual help in farm work even became contingent on participation in the local peasant association. Those who were reluctant to join were denied the benefits of mutual help by villagers who had joined.

Also helping to mitigate cleavages within the peasantry was the peasants' growing awareness that they needed large organizations in order to be heard. Peasants throughout the region learned during the 1930s that they made little or no headway by appealing individually or in small groups to landlords or local officials. Consequently, they began to consolidate, acting together in larger groups and forming organizations that encompassed several villages, municipalities, and provinces. They brought others into their movement by emphasizing shared problems and common bonds, which the changing conditions had created. Demonstrations and strikes, in turn, helped to make others aware that their plight was not unique, thereby giving them more incentive to join too.

The learning process during the agrarian unrest included learning how to organize. Peasants tried to profit from the experience of past failures and successes of collective action. Peasants in an area learned not only from their own efforts, but from those of others as well. From the protests,

strikes, and related tactics of villagers elsewhere, peasants in a given locality picked up cues and suggestions that seemed helpful to their own situation. In this way, too, villagers grew to know more about other peasants farther away, thus learning *about* them as well as *from* them. Word of mouth was the most common means of communication. Particularly important, for instance, were those people who moved from one area to the next in search of better land and employment; they passed on what they had seen and understood about organizations and protests elsewhere. As the changing conditions began to homogenize the daily experience of villagers, they also produced a mobile peasantry that could begin to knit them together. With the growth of actual peasant organizations, leaders who traveled from village to village provided more explicit links. Many villages of Central Luzon accumulated collective knowledge about organizing methods, which was passed down from one generation to the next and became part of the village culture. Of course, people used what they had learned when they turned from discontent to revolt.

Unfortunately for the peasantry, its protests brought little relief. Government authorities never took decisive steps in the 1930s or after the Japanese occupation to remedy the peasants' problems. Despite their occasional friendly gestures, the country's presidents and other highly placed persons whom peasants repeatedly approached continued to side with the large landowners, sugar mill owners, and other elite circles. The courts, aside from being an expensive route, proved more responsible to the influential and the wealthy than they did to peasant petitioners. As for the laws that Congress passed, they protected the claims of big landlords more than they helped peasants. Consequently, even if the laws had been fully enforced, which they rarely were, they would have brought the peasantry little satisfaction. Meanwhile, landlords could call on government agencies and the Philippine Constabulary to back up their claims against tenants.

5. What changed the direction of the peasant movement from protest to revolt, however, was not merely discouraging results. Rather, it was repression by the government and agrarian elites. The landlords and government officials' lawless and frequently violent actions forced peasants to resort to organized violence. In the peasantry's view, rebellion was the only alternative left in the face of numerous illegal maneuvers and violent actions against them.

This important point is another one which previous studies of the Huk movement have practically ignored.⁷ Even when they have discussed the

⁷ Scaff (*Philippine Answer to Communism*) has no discussion of the repression. Lachica (*Huk*) barely mentions it; he cites in a few sentences the unseating of Democratic Alliance congressmen-elect and the killing of Juan Feleo (pp. 120-121). The other studies cited in footnotes also ignore the repression. Several general studies of Philippine history, however, do discuss the repression, although very briefly: Guerrero, *Philippine Society*, p. 66; Agoncillo and Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People*, pp. 534-536.

landed elites' violence or the government's lawlessness, they have minimized its intensity and its significance for peasants. More often they have dwelled on the peasantry's violence, which government officials included among their justifications for countering the "insurgency" with force.

Repression had driven peasants in Central Luzon to rebel on two occasions. The first was during the Japanese occupation; the second was during the early years of the new Philippine Republic. When the Japanese army invaded the Philippines, the entire political situation in Central Luzon changed within a matter of weeks. No longer could people publicly organize and criticize. Furthermore, the Japanese soldiers and their allies in the Philippine Constabulary and municipal police forces were ill-tempered and often brutal. Because of this repression and the closing of other outlets for public expression of discontent and because the villagers disliked the foreign invaders (whose government was even worse than the Filipino-American one before it), thousands of veterans of the peasant movement took their organization underground. Gradually, they became skilled in guerrilla military methods. The result was the Hukbalahap, a well-organized and effective resistance movement.

After the Japanese occupation, the peasant movement resumed working through legal channels. The opening of the political system even a little encouraged peasants to turn away from rebellion. Now, however, their movement was stronger and more vigorous than before. The leadership and experience from the Hukbalahap resistance added immeasurably to what the movement had achieved during the 1930s. Besides that, the villagers' effective resistance to the Japanese had buoyed their confidence in their collective power. The result was the PKM (National Peasants Union)—the largest peasant organization in the country's history up to that time—and the peasant-supported Democratic Alliance, a political party which ran eight congressional candidates in Central Luzon in the 1946 election.

As the peasantry's organizations became more powerful, however, government authorities and local elites became more repressive. Harassment was not entirely new, of course, for the landlords' private armies, in cooperation with provincial detachments of the Philippine Constabulary, had frequently abused villagers, broken up strikes, and forcibly evicted tenants during the 1930s. But in 1945-1946, the repression was significantly worse. The elites had more to fear because the peasant movement was so threatening, and they were more hostile because of the bitter animosities that had built up between them and the Hukbalahap during the Japanese occupation. The disdainful and destructive way in which returning Americans and the Filipino elites treated Hukbalahap veterans after the Japanese army had been defeated, the intense harassment of former Hukbalahap participants and supporters, the abuses against PKM members, the murder of PKM leader Juan Feleo—all of these and many more contributed directly to the rebellion. Perhaps the most significant period of repression occurred during and immediately following the 1946 election campaign.

Government authorities, for example, directed police, constabulary soldiers, and civilian guards—who were on the payrolls of landlords and the government—to raid offices of the Democratic Alliance and PKM, break up political rallies, and beat up peasant leaders and spokesmen. Adding insult to injury, national government authorities, including President Manuel Roxas, manipulated Congress so as to refuse illegally to seat the six Democratic Alliance candidates whom voters in Central Luzon had elected to the House of Representatives.

Repression had become so significant for peasants that it and related issues—such as demands that the government disband the civilian guards—became more important to many villagers than the agrarian issues themselves. Many people joined the HMB guerrillas because of repression rather than because they wanted bigger shares of their harvests or good relations with landlords. Of course, unresolved agrarian issues remained indispensable for understanding why Huk guerrillas and government soldiers fought. A major theme in the HMB's demands, however, was that the government must stop killing and abusing people before peasant leaders would meet again with landlords and government officials to discuss agrarian reform proposals.

Peasants who rebelled in Central Luzon, therefore, did so in desperation. They felt they had no other choice. Rebellion was not a step they had planned to take in order to get what they wanted. It was instead a reaction to an impossible situation. Either they used the military skills many had learned while resisting the Japanese or they would be imprisoned and killed, lose their homes and lands, and leave unavenged the deaths and abuses of relatives and friends. Even as they fought, they continued to try to return to more peaceful and legal avenues. For example, the HMB attempted several times to negotiate a truce. Indicative, too, of the peasants' reluctance to rebel was the fact that the revolt receded in the 1950s as the Philippine army became less abusive and the government disbanded the civilian guards.

6. The sixth conclusion concerns leadership. Leaders never caused the unrest or the rebellion. They only helped to shape it. Sometimes leaders were not even in the lead. Nor could they necessarily tell rank and file participants what to do. Significantly, the movement had not one set of leaders but at least three, which developed as the unrest expanded. Those three types of leaders played different parts; they also reflected important differences within the movement. Generally, leaders varied with respect to their connections to peasant organizations and with respect to their ideologies or outlooks.

One type in the Huk movement, which I call local leaders, were usually peasants themselves who knew intimately the predicaments fellow peasants faced. Their goals were also generally restricted to the immediate concerns of most villagers—to reestablish traditional patron-client relationships and end repression. They became leaders by virtue of the respect and esteem

they had earned in the eyes of others in the vicinity. They had emerged as leaders from the struggle itself; they were not imposed on the local area from the outside. Geographically, most of these local leaders stayed in their home villages and municipalities. They were officials in local chapters of peasant unions, squadron leaders, underground leaders for the village or municipality, and HMB field commanders. Three examples were Hilario Felipe and Patricio del Rosario (both in Talavera, Nueva Ecija) and Benjamin Cunanan (in southern Tarlac).

A second type of leader included those who were rather distant from the peasants' world and whose goals or outlook only partly complemented and sometimes conflicted with the peasant activists' goals. These were the national or top-level leaders. In most cases, they were not from a peasant background. Or if they were, they had left that background behind them through education, occupation, and residence. Most were urban intellectuals, bureaucrats, lawyers, and other professionals who were sympathetic to the peasants' plight. They offered their services after watching local initiatives, or they were approached by local peasant spokesmen to help with larger organizational tasks. The special contributions of these leaders were their skills and knowledge about taking grievances to court, lobbying with congressmen, petitioning government offices, and using other avenues of protest and appeal that went beyond the villages and municipalities.

Many leaders in this national or top-level leadership group wanted not only to help the peasant movement, but also to push for major economic and political reforms—even radical changes—that went beyond what the peasantry was talking about. The most noticeable leaders of this type were several national officers and theoreticians in the Philippine Communist Party (PKP). Illustrative here were such men as Mateo del Castillo, Jose Lava, Jesus Lava, Mariano Balgos, and Guillermo Capadocia.

A third type of leader shared attributes of both local and national leaders. These middle-level leaders lived in the villages and market towns, maintained close ties to the peasantry, and usually were of peasant background themselves. Typically they were veteran local peasant leaders who had become well-known among peasants in many municipalities or even in much of the region and who traveled around as officers of provincial and regional peasant unions. They were people like Luis Taruc, Cenon Bungay, Agaton Bulaong, Jose de Leon, and Juan Feleo, who reemerged time after time as prominent spokesmen for the peasants' local initiatives and who became leading figures in the Hukbalahap resistance and the HMB rebellion. Partly because of their experience and partly because of their slight removal from village life due to their occupations (such as craftsmen, urban workers, high school teachers, and local government employees) and sometimes education, these middle-level leaders could also understand the intentions of national leaders who were more radical than the peasantry. To some extent, they even shared the national leadership's radical vision of a new order. Many, for example, were officers in the PKP. As a consequence of their position, middle-level leaders often found themselves trying to bridge the gap between local peasant organizations

and the movement's national leadership. They represented the more conservative peasant aims to the national leadership while trying to broaden the peasantry's ideology.

As this study has shown, the PKP did not inspire or control the peasant movement in Central Luzon during the 1930s and 1940s, the Hukbalahap, or the Huk rebellion itself. This finding disputes a common argument made in previous studies and in United States and Philippine government accounts.⁸ Frequently these sources have left the impression that the PKP created or tightly controlled the rebellion. What appears closer to the truth is that the PKP, as an organization, moved back and forth between alliance and nonalliance with the peasant movement in Central Luzon. For example, the PKP was allied for awhile with the peasants' resistance during the Japanese occupation. Later, because of its "retreat-for-defense policy," the party's top leadership decided that the PKP and the Hukbalahap should lie low. Most peasants in the Hukbalahap, however, continued to fight, paying little mind to the PKP. After the Japanese occupation, the PKP again aligned itself with the peasant movement, as did some other groups that desired certain political reforms, which included but also exceeded what the peasants in Central Luzon demanded. The formal manifestation of this collaboration was the Democratic Alliance. When thousands of peasants turned to rebellion in 1946, however, the PKP backed away once again from the movement. Two years later, the party rejoined the peasants, whose rebellion was still raging.

Guiding the party's policies regarding whether or not to join—and try to lead—the peasants were considerations that reflected its objectives as defined, for the most part, by its top leadership—especially its theoreticians. Consequently, when the party's top leadership deliberated about what actions to endorse, they evaluated economic and political conditions that went far beyond those directly affecting peasants in one region. Therefore, the party's actions did not always converge with what peasant activists in Central Luzon wanted and did. One consideration, for example, was whether to rely on "legal struggle" or on "armed struggle" in order to pursue radical changes in the country. Using criteria which the party's top leaders believed were in keeping with Marxist-Leninist theory and evidence concerning conditions all over the Philippines and in other parts of the world, the party concluded in 1946 that the time for armed struggle—revolution—was not ripe. Therefore, it decided not to join or support the rebellion. In 1948-1949, the conditions were ripening, according to the party's new appraisal, so the PKP joined the HMB with the idea of taking

⁸ See, for example, Scraft, *Philippine Answer to Communism*, chapters I and 10; Lachica, *Huk*, pp. 103-135; Saulo, *Communism in the Philippines*, pp. 36-39, 44-47; Baclagon, *Lessons from the Huk Campaign*, pp. 2-4; Felder, *Socio-Economic Aspects of Counterinsurgency*; and Leighton, *The Huk Rebellion*. William J. Pomeroy, the American Communist Party member who was in the Philippine Communist Party and the Huk movement until his capture in 1952, also argues that the PKP led the peasant movement, including the Huk rebellion: *An American-Made Tragedy* (New York: International Publishers, 1974).

charge of it and pushing the "revolutionary situation" into a full-blown "revolutionary crisis," which would topple the government in Manila.

Another consideration for the PKP was the working class. According to the PKP's theory, workers, not peasants, should be the vanguard of the revolutionary movement. Even though labor unions in Manila in the late 1940s still had not become militant and showed little inclination to support the peasants' struggle, the party's top leadership figured that the PKP could help to push workers into the revolution by taking charge of the peasant rebellion.

Despite the PKP's official positions, however, there were always some who considered themselves party members but did not follow its policies. In short, the party's small membership was not tightly disciplined. Consequently, party members joined the peasants' rebellion in 1946 even though the PKP did not approve, just as there were many members after 1948 who refused to join or support the HMB even though the PKP did. Moreover, even those party members who were in the rebellion did not act in unison. One of the chief complaints of the party's top leaders during the 1950s was that lower echelon party members did not adhere to guidelines and orders coming from the PKP's national offices.

The alliances, when they did occur between peasant organizations or peasant rebels and the PKP, remained tenuous. This was another reason why the party had only limited influence on the course of the peasant movement. First, its ties to the peasant movement were mainly at the upper levels of the movement—primarily through national and middle-level leaders of the Hukbalahap, PKM, and HMB. The party had few roots in the villages and municipalities of Central Luzon. Second, the goals of the PKP, on the one hand, and the main thrust of the peasant movement, on the other, were frequently out of phase and sometimes in conflict with each other. Oversimplified, the party wanted revolution, whereas peasants did not. The party after 1948 wanted to overthrow the Philippine government; peasants only wanted the government to stop its repression. The party wanted to end the tenancy system, redistribute land, set up cooperative farms, nationalize industries, and end American imperialism once and for all. Most peasants in the Huk rebellion, in contrast, wanted to reform the tenancy system, paid little attention to nationalist issues, and saw little connection between their problems and American imperialism. For the PKP, the rebellion was part of a larger struggle for national liberation and radical changes. For peasants, their rebellion was a whole, not a part of something else. And it was an outgrowth of their struggle to survive, which they justified entirely in terms of local values and conditions.

Differences exist between national leaders and local leaders and participants in any peasant movement. And one of the tasks of national leadership is to bring people in the movement closer together by helping to develop consensus on objectives. Certainly, the PKP tried to do this both prior to and during the Huk rebellion. Important to the effort, too, were middle-level leaders, who often played the intermediary between the people

in Central Luzon's villages and the national leadership of the PKP. Had the movement more time—had, for example, the Philippine government remained as militarily and politically incompetent as the KMT in China or the French in Vietnam—perhaps the peasantry and the radicals could have moved closer together. As things turned out, however, there was an ironic twist. Peasants and radicals glided past each other, each going the opposite way from the other and from the way each had been going before. The PKP, which only a few years earlier had opposed open rebellion, insisted in the 1950s that the armed struggle must continue because signs for revolutionary upheaval were good. Most peasants in the HMB, in contrast, who had taken up their guns against government and landlord soldiers long before the PKP had consented, began laying down their weapons and turning away from rebellion as the government reduced repression and wooed villagers with promises of reform.

7. Colonialism contributed significantly to the growth of agrarian unrest, with colonial regimes and local elites working hand-in-hand against the peasants' protests and rebellion. The deterioration of traditional patron-client relations in the countryside was, in part, a consequence of colonialism. For one thing, colonial officials relied on local elites in order to rule. In so doing, they strengthened the local elites' power while simultaneously making the elites less dependent on villagers for support and status. Second, the colonial regime's economic policies encouraged and gave monetary incentives for cash crop production. This helped to link the country even more securely than before to the world's capitalistic economy. Landed elites became increasingly concerned about maximizing profits—a concern which pushed them to demand more from workers on their lands while minimizing their costs for labor. Because the interests of the colonial rulers and local elites became so entwined, it is understandable why the two reacted similarly when villagers dared to protest or demand reforms. Together, too, they battled peasant rebels.

Both the American and Japanese regimes were aligned with Filipino elites against poor and propertyless people. Neither regime threatened the economic and political position of the Filipino elites in Central Luzon. The American policy, for example, to title all land strengthened the legal rights of landowners but weakened the traditional rights of land users, which is what most peasants in Central Luzon were. American policies that encouraged sugar production favored the sugar centrals and large landowners, not the tenants and cane cutters. Perhaps most important of all, the armies and police forces, whose job was to keep a law and order weighted heavily in favor of an inequitable status quo, became an extension of the local elites, just as those elites became an extension of the colonial regime. The central government and the local elites became so interlocked that civilian guards, which began essentially as private armies of large landowners, became auxiliary troops for the Philippine Constabulary and municipal police forces during the American regime and the Philippine Republic.

American policies immediately after the Japanese occupation require special mention here. So far as I know, previous scholarship on the Huk movement has paid little attention to the military and administrative reprisals that Americans took against the Hukbalahap. Yet these were blatant and often brutal. The American regime sided with the Hukbalahap's enemies—particularly the big landowners in Central Luzon and the American-affiliated USAFFE guerrilla leaders—and denied the Hukbalahap guerrillas the recognition they deserved for resisting and helping to defeat the Japanese army. Worse than that, from the Hukbalahap's perspective, the American and Filipino authorities disarmed them—sometimes forcibly—and frequently bounded them as criminals. These actions unquestionably were part of the repression which pushed peasants into rebellion.

A final point about colonialism is that it continued to affect what happened in Central Luzon even after the Philippines had become independent of the United States. The Philippine constitution guaranteed this continuation when the "parity amendment"—itself a result of reciprocal back-scratching by Americans and Filipino elites—was added. Beyond that, the United States gave considerable economic, political, and military support to the new Philippine government's anti-Huk campaigns. Although a comprehensive assessment of the amount of support, exactly why it was given, and its degree of importance must await the day when documents reposing in Washington and Manila archives are open to public scrutiny, the available evidence shows that this aid was extremely helpful to the Philippine government. It may have been essential.

8. What did the peasants' rebellion accomplish, if anything? The answer must be tentative, of course, for the meaning of the past changes as the future becomes present. Each generation can look back and find new meanings in old events. Generally, however, the peasant movement's efforts to restore a fading traditional agrarian society brought some limited reprieves, while at the same time increasing the social distance between peasants and their former patrons. Class antagonism, heightened by the struggle itself, made it more difficult, if not impossible, to reestablish traditional relations. Paradoxically, therefore, the struggle that helped to form a peasant class, increase class consciousness among peasants, make peasants more powerful politically, and build new peasant associations, also hastened the decline of the old order, which peasants had set out to restore.

Villagers in Central Luzon attributed several benefits to the Huk rebellion. One was a reduction in rent for many—but certainly not all—tenants. Peasants in Bulacan told a social scientist in 1964, for example, that because of the Huk rebellion, "farm rent dropped from 50 to 45 percent!" And, they added "if the next one [peasant uprising] occurred, it would drop to 40 percent."⁹ Many people in San Ricardo, Talavera, said that after the Huk rebellion they unilaterally reduced their rent from 55 or

⁹ Akira Takahashi, *Land and Peasants in Central Luzon* (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies, 1969), p. 77.

50 percent of the harvest to 50 or 45 percent. Landlords did nothing whereas before, according to one elderly tenant, "they would have sent their armed guards and kicked us off the land." Landlords, villagers said, were more cautious and respectful of the peasantry's collective power after the rebellion. People also recalled that interest rates declined a little, at least for a few years after the rebellion, and local officials and courts treated their complaints more sympathetically. Perhaps most important, the Huk movement firmly established the peasantry's right to its own organizations and unions. And the two largest peasant organizations in Central Luzon during the 1960s—the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) and the Malayang Samahang Magsasaka (MASAKA, Free Farmers Union)—grew directly out of the Huk movement. Many villagers also attributed the reforms of the Ramon Magsaysay era to the Huk rebellion. Without the Huks, people said, Magsaysay and his administration would not have ended the repression and begun agrarian reforms.

Despite these changes, living conditions for people in villages like San Ricardo improved little—if at all—after the revolt. And relations between landlords and tenants never returned to the traditional style. Disputes between the two classes began to surface again even before the guns of the Huks and government soldiers went silent. For instance, newspapers in January 1953 reported about the violence and expectations of violence on several haciendas in Nueva Ecija as a consequence of disagreements between tenants and landlords over crop divisions; reports in December 1953 told of additional serious conflicts in the same province because tenants claimed hacienda guards had prevented them from harvesting rice to feed their hungry families; in June 1954 numerous tenants, through their unions, filed charges in court against landowners for violating agrarian laws.¹⁰ Some of the reforms included in new tenancy laws also pushed landlords and peasants further apart rather than closer together. Laws, for example, providing for written contracts between tenant and landlord were partly a consequence of the peasant unrest. At first peasants welcomed the contracts but increasingly realized that they strait-jacketed a relationship which ideally was diffuse and flexible. Legislation in the 1950s and 1960s also included provisions allowing share tenants (*kasama*) to become leasehold tenants (*buwisan*), in which case tenants would pay a fixed amount of rent each harvest. But the leasehold system also absolved landlords of all responsibility to help pay agricultural expenses and give loans to their tenants.

The worst change was the trend among large landowners to mechanize. Before the 1950s, mechanized farming in Central Luzon was limited to threshing machines and a few tractors here and there. In the 1950s and 1960s, many large landowners mechanized nearly everything—plowing, weeding, harvesting, and threshing—thereby eliminating the need for tenants. Manolo Tinio in San Ricardo, for example, introduced machinery in

1953 that would eventually displace the seventy or eighty tenants who farmed his 216 hectares. In 1970, he had only ten tenants, and by 1974 he expected to have none. Other large landowners in the region were doing the same thing by the end of the 1950s.¹¹ Replacing tenants with machines and seasonal labor was the final act, for those landowners who could afford it, in the drama of deteriorating relations between peasants and the landed elites in the twentieth century. In San Ricardo mechanized farming, coupled with increased population density, added significantly to the village's poverty.¹²

Many peasants in Central Luzon said the question concerning the rebellion's accomplishments posed a false issue. It implied that those who supported and joined the rebellion had a choice. Most did not. One former Huk in San Ricardo summarized this view well: "Even if we got nothing, that's not important. What's important is that we *had* to fight back. And we fought so well that the big people and the government will never forget us again." The meaning of the revolt to people in Central Luzon's villages goes beyond the weighing of positive and negative, short-term and long-term results. Many in San Ricardo, for instance, said that life in the 1960s was not much better and in some respects worse than it was in the 1930s. They had grave doubts in 1970, however, about launching into rebellion for fear they would suffer worse reprisals than they experienced during the 1940s and 1950s. "Don't be so quick to cry 'revolution,'" cautioned a former Huk in 1970 while speaking with student radicals from Manila who had been preaching to villagers at a meeting of the Talavera chapter of the MASAKA. Despite these considerations, villagers remained proud of what they, their parents, and relatives had done—their peasant organizations of the 1930s, the Hukbalahap, the PKM, and the HMB. This pride was part of the peasant movement's meaning. The movement's success was the movement itself and what it did to people in Central Luzon's villages. "We showed them [the landlords and government] we weren't slaves," an elderly man in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, said to me as he reflected on his Huk days. "We didn't lie down like whimpering dogs when they started to whip us. We stood up to them and fought for what was rightfully ours." People in San Ricardo agreed. Thus when asked why the rebellion failed, a tenant farmer and veteran of the peasant movement eloquently summarized the sentiments of many others: "No strike, no demonstration, no rebellion fails. Protest against injustice always succeeds."

¹⁰ For an early discussion about this, see L. R. Pamatmat, "A Comment on Farm Mechanization and Tenancy in the Philippines," *Philippine Agricultural Situation* (September 1959):33-36.

¹¹ Benedict J. Kerkvliet, "Agrarian Conditions since the Huk Rebellion: A Barrio in Central Luzon," in a monograph edited by the author called *Political Change in the Philippines: Studies of Local Politics Preceding Martial Law* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974), pp. 1-26.

¹⁰ *Manila Chronicle*, 11 January 1953, p. 1, 29 January 1953, p. 1, 15 December 1953, p. 1; *Manila Times*, 29 June 1954, p. 1.