

represented the peasants' interests, but their structures and composition and their very functioning within the traditional political frameworks, made it unlikely that these interests could ever be fully protected.

Only two Latin American countries (Peru in 1968 and Chile in 1970) have undergone significant and genuine reforms within the last twenty years. In Peru agrarian reforms followed a military coup which established a peculiarly left-wing military government committed to changing the inimical structures of the countryside. The 1970s, though, witnessed an abdication of that commitment as the composition of the military hierarchy swung to the Right and much of the valuable work of the agrarian reform of 1969 has been undone.

Nor in Chile was the Allende government able ultimately to get the better of the anti-reformist Latin American political machine. Here was proof that the US was as indulgent in rhetoric about reform as the Latin American governments themselves. When its economic interest is at stake such rhetoric has always gone to the wall. In Guatemala, between 1952 and 1954 the Arbenz government instituted a comprehensive agrarian reform. The succeeding government, installed following a US invasion of the country, reversed the reform, rather proving the point!

Changing the agrarian structure in Latin America has always implied disrupting the social and political balance, upsetting existing institutions and threatening vested interests. For the Latin American governments the rhetoric of agrarian reform has been enough to stomach.

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## Violence as junta reveals land plan

AT LEAST one million acres are being redistributed to landless labourers and tenant farmers in El Salvador. But the announcement of the sweeping redistribution of land sparked off a new round of violence, writes Colin Green.

● Left-wing militants stepped up their action. They were aware that their wider socialist goals were threatened by the efforts by the ruling junta to give land to the people.

In the seven days following the announcement of agrarian reform, 70 Left-wing militants were killed, according to Oscar Arnulfo Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador. The Archbishop himself was murdered on March 24.\*

● But the severest reaction came from the Right-wing, which opposes the reform because it will destroy their political power.

All farms over 1,250 acres are affected: this means that 244 haciendas will lose land. Owners may keep only 350 hectares for their private use.

Peasants who receive land will have to pay for it; 70,000 are expected to work on new communal farms.

The junta is reported to be considering extending the reform to cover all farms over 250 acres.

Meanwhile, some of the impatient peasants who have been seizing farms have been gunned down by the National Guard.

Fifty people died in Cathedral Square during the Archbishop's funeral. And at least 70 peasants were killed near El Oro, about 25 miles outside San Salvador, a few days later.

The left-wing guerrillas, whose opposition to the ruling junta can only strengthen the powerful conservative elements in El Salvador who oppose the land reform plans, have proved powerless to protect the peasants. Twenty-four peasants were found shot dead on April 12, scattered along roads and in fields.

\*This tragedy was foreshadowed in *Land & Liberty*, Jan.-Feb. 1979, p. 10.

### EL SALVADOR

FERDINAND MARCOS was democratically elected as President of the Philippines in 1965.

Seven years later he became dictator: he imposed martial law in September 1972.

In declaring martial law, Marcos promised sweeping land reforms as a crucial part of the need—as he perceived it—for continuing change to create a "new society" for all Filipinos.

In a decree, he said there was need "to achieve dignified existence for small farmers, free from the pernicious institutional restraints and practices which have not only retarded the agriculture of the country, but have also produced widespread discontent and unrest among our farmers, one of the causes of the existing national emergency."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that, seven years later, martial law still rules, therefore suggests that he has failed to effectively implement a reform of the land tenure system in such a way as to remove the pre-existing discontent which was causing political instability.

His latest foray into the field of land ownership illuminates the kind of thinking which has held per capita incomes to just £250 . . .

ON SEPT. 11 the President announced that all land in metropolitan Manila had been placed under State control.

All urban land, covering 400 square miles, became a reform zone.

"The urban land reform will safeguard our future generation and cause an equal distribution of wealth," he declared in a televised speech marking his sixty-second birthday.<sup>2</sup>

Such a reform, he claimed, marked the foundation of peaceful revolution under the new society.

● 150m. to 200m. pesos (over £10m.) will be set aside for land expropriation.

● No more land can be sold and no buildings constructed without permission of the regulatory commission of the Human Settlements Ministry.

● Landless and homeless people will be given the first chance to buy land.

It is doubtful, however, that these measures will radically alter the maldistribution of income, or lift the ailing economy<sup>3</sup> out of trouble.

For existing landowners will not lose out, the future generation will be no better placed to secure a foothold on the land, and relatively few of today's landless will be able to command the financial resources

# The Iron Butterfly & the President's 'New Society'

necessary to make use of the opportunities which theoretically are about to be made available to them.

**T**HERE IS, however, one clear winner: the President's wife.

Madam Imelda Marcos, at the age of 49, now has direct control over the richest part of the Filipino economy.

Known as The Iron Butterfly, Madam Marcos is said to nurture ambitions as the person best suited to succeed her husband as President.

Her personal wealth is reported to be anywhere between \$200-\$250m. — in any event, the ex-beauty queen is now one of the ten richest women in the world.

## By PAUL KNIGHT

But she says that the trappings of material wealth interest her less than political power. And in the Philippines, today, she is the power behind the throne...

**M**ADAM MARCOS is Governor of metro-Manila, an agglomeration of five cities.

And now, as head of the Human Settlements Ministry, she has direct bureaucratic control over the land, its use, and the 8m. people who live on it.

Press reports regularly refer to Madam Marcos as "President in all but name." This, she — and her husband — dispute. What cannot be denied, however, is that she has directed a sustained campaign of self-aggrandisement.

The visible trappings of her power are in Manila, where she has had hotels and art galleries and conference centres thrown up and named after her — "seen by some as an extravagant personality cult being built in a desert of slums and shacks."<sup>4</sup>

Many of the projects are privately-financed out of donations from businessmen whose tax returns are closely scrutinized by Madam Marcos — a fact which she openly admits.

Recently, she proposed a £6m. basilica: but the Archbishop,



Cardinal Jaime Sin, declined to endorse the plan. He proposed an alternative: the money should be spent on "low-cost housing and/or a fully-equipped hospital for the poor in the area."<sup>5</sup>

The Archbishop has emerged as a leader of the opposition in the Philippines, but it is unlikely that Marcos can move against him in the way that he has done with his other opponents (the leader of the Liberal Party, Benigno Aquino, has been incarcerated in an army camp for seven years).

But there is no serious reason to believe that the Marcos dynasty will collapse in the foreseeable future. For even without an enlightened programme of land reform, the poor Filipinos appear to idolise Imelda Marcos in a manner reminiscent of Argentina's Eva Peron.

● January's local elections, the first for eight years, have been characterised as "the latest sleight of hand,"<sup>6</sup> in which observers report the use of intimidation, fraud, violence and the 'pork barrel' to ensure that, in most areas, hand-picked Marcos men were elected.

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## FORTHCOMING

**LAND & LIBERTY** plans to publish additional features on land reform in forthcoming issues.

**Geoffrey Lee** will outline the history of land tenure which has contributed to the present political instability in **Portugal**.

**Dr. Archibald Woodruff** traces the history of ideas which influenced the remarkably successful land reform in **Taiwan**.

And we present two opposing views of the impact of land reform in the **Philippines**.