

EEC and Asean Regional Development Initiatives: Divergent Experiences at the Grassroots Level

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By 1992, Europe will be without barriers. Therein, goods, labor services, and capital shall flow freely among member-states of the European Community. [1] Decades ago, such a scenario was considered impossible. But with the burgeoning of the Western European market to four trillion dollars as a result of regional cooperation, closer economic integration seems to be the logical fate of the region and its 320 million people. [2]

Similar endeavors towards regional development are being undertaken by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). [3] While these are considered as the more "successful" regional integration efforts in the developing world, Asean economic initiatives terribly pale in comparison with those of the EC.

Behind the success of the European Community as a model of economic integration is the effective implementation of its policies and the exercise of political will by its member-states. Among Asean member-countries, on the other hand, there is a terrible lack of political will to forge regional integration. Their relations are even undermined by economic competition and political differences. But then, the latter obstacles to Asean integration were also present during the incipient stage of the European Community. Perhaps, the more important factor behind Europe's successful integration is the people's active participation at the

grassroots level. Hundreds of Euro-groups, i.e., European pressure groups representing a variety of interests, from business to consumer interests, have emerged and are actively intervening into the decision-making process of the Community. This created stronger ties among the different sectors of European societies, and minimized whatever differences that existed among EC member-states. There has consequently grown today a European identity that facilitates the increasing consolidation of the Community.

In comparison, the Asean experiment in regional integration neither involves grassroots participation nor fosters an Asean identity. The people of Asean member-states are oblivious to the regional grouping's *raison d'être*. This has proven to be one of the major obstacles to the integration of the region. Widespread indifference to the goals of Asean prevents its member-states from developing the political will to operationalize regional cooperation. This predicament may even prove to be irreversible as popular efforts to actively intervene in decision-making, at the national and regional levels, are generally ignored, and even repressed.

This article examines the factors which enable the European people to actively intervene in the Community's decision-making process. It also discusses the obstacles to similar participation of popular organizations and movements in the Asean integration process. Specifically, the experience of Euro-groups in forg-



● Summitteers: Top, Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad, Indonesia's Suharto, Sultan of Brunei; above, Corazon Aquino (Philippines), Prem Tinsulanond (Thailand), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore)

ing closer regional links and influencing the Community's policies shall be compared with that of people's organizations in Southeast Asia. For this purpose, case studies will be provided on the activities of EEC and Asean pressure groups in agriculture, labor, and non-government organizations.

The Emergence of an Influential Farmers' Euro-group

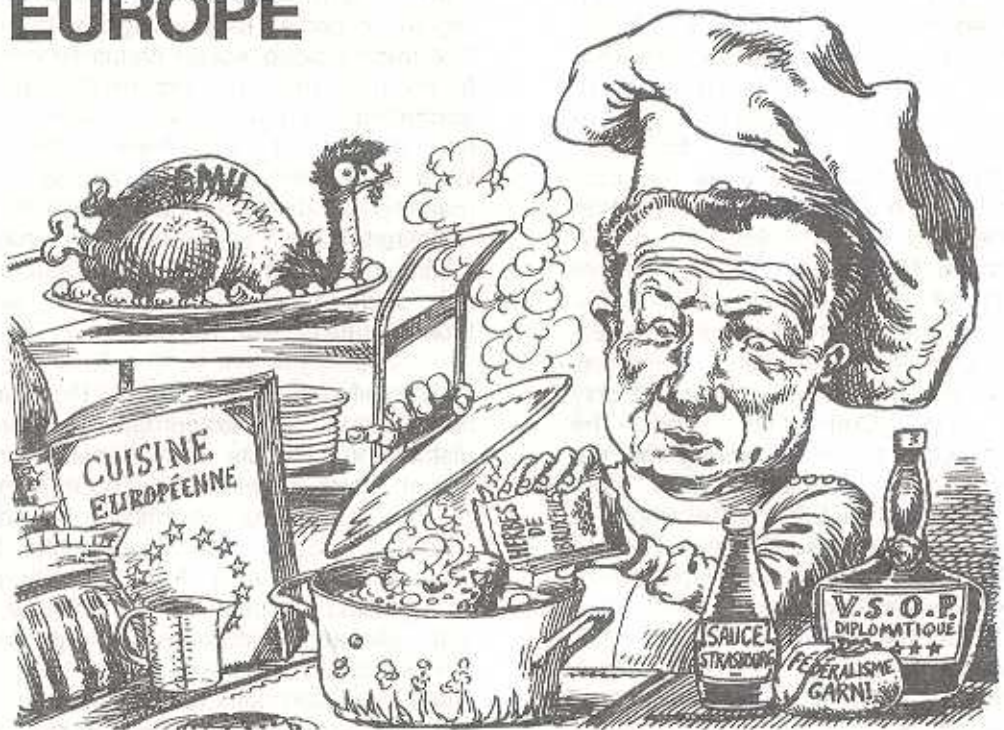
Agriculture is the backbone of the European Economic Community (EEC). In the year after its inception in 1957, the EEC decreed that its agricultural program, as embodied in the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), cannot be changed by national legislation. [4] In the 1980s, the bulk of the Community's legislations pertained to agriculture, and two-thirds of its budget expenditures went to this sector. [5]

The unification of the European agricultural market began with the creation of the common grains market on 1 July 1967. This was eventually followed by agreements to unify the market for beef, mill, and other products. By 1973, about

90 percent of the Community's agricultural commodities were controlled by the EC. [6]

While it is true that the political resolve of EC heads of government was considered important to the implementation of the CAP, it was the cooperation of the different national unions of farmers that was seen as most crucial to its success. [7] Thus, the EC went out of its way to create structures for the integration of these farmers' groups. In September 1958, the EEC Agricultural Director-General formed the *Comite des Organisations Professionnelles Agricoles de la Communaute Europennnes* (COPA) to serve as a venue for dialogue between national agricultural interest groups and the European Commission. [8] A year later, on 24 September 1959, EEC established the General Commission for Agricultural Cooperation (COGECA) as the umbrella organization of the agricultural cooperatives of its member-states. COPA and COGECA merged in December 1962. For these structures to work, a campaign was initiated by the Community to bring national farmers' organizations into the

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European umbrella associations and to instill in them the importance of arriving at a unified agricultural policy.

But the EC heads of government could build only so many structures to promote agricultural cooperation. Ultimately, it was the farmers' interest and participation that determined the effective functioning of these structures. Initially, the creation of the Common Agricultural Policy, particularly with regard to the grains sector, did not sit well with farmers' groups in Europe. This was especially true for the two most powerful Western European farmers' organizations, the German Farmers' Union (DBV) and the French Agricultural Association (AGPB). For these groups, the CAP formula "to buy Europe" would only cheapen their agricultural products as their pricing would coincide with that of the cheaper agricultural products of other EEC member-states. The French farmers, in particular, felt that the elimination of delivery schemes would lead to a decline in their income as they could no longer extract profit from the stocking agents, i.e., the agency delivering the goods. [9] They found this policy unfair as the same

fate would not befall West German and Italian farmers who did not make use of stocking agents.

There were also instances when other farmers' groups refused to cooperate with their respective national governments. The German Farmers' Union, for instance, rejected the grains policy of the EEC in 1958. This action threatened to upset the agreement between Konrad Adenauer and Charles de Gaulle to mutually support each other's foreign policy (specifically with regards to French assistance of West Germany's policies towards East Germany, and West Germany's support of France's objectives in Europe and the Atlantic). At that time, French and German farmers demanded that their national governments get better concessions from the European Community. But their respective governments, according to the farmers, could not be relied upon to pursue local interests at the regional level as they (governments) were bound by the policies of the Community. [10] In those cases where the farmers did not have a close working relationship with their national bureaucracy, political parties provided an alternative channel for influencing EEC policies with

regard to the grains market. The French AGPB, however, only had links with political parties that had no substantial influence on national policies. [11] The initial inability of the national governments to satisfy their needs led the European farmers to close ranks vis-a-vis the EEC (e.g., the French AGPB and the German DBV developed closer links). Eventually, the European Community became more conscious of the need to satisfy the demands of the national agricultural pressure groups. What emerged, therefore, was a relationship of compromise not only between the Community and the farmers' groups, but also among the national agricultural associations and other sectoral groups. The EEC, for example, is viewed as a compromise between German industrial and French agricultural concerns. Since the beginning, France had made it clear that it would join a common market on industrial policies which would favor the German industry if Germany would, in turn, abide by common policies that are more advantageous to French farmers. [12]

Regional Cooperation for Asean Trade and Industrialization

Asean efforts are directed towards closer regional cooperation rather than immediate regional integration. Asean focuses on increasing regional trade among its member-states. As with the EEC, trade among Asean members involves mostly agricultural products. The Asean governments, however, have yet to conclude a Common Agricultural Policy, although they have already entered into a Preferential Treatment Agreement (PTA) which covers agricultural products and other export commodities. The PTA is designed to "gradually free intra-regional trade from widely diverging trade barriers". Goods covered by the PTA, for example, were permitted to enter member-countries at tariffs reduced by 20 to 25 percent. [13] That this agreement was concluded more than a decade after the inception of Asean in 1967 reveals the little importance with which Asean members regard regional trade. The general preference is still for the export of commodities to the more advanced industrialized countries, which

corner the majority of exports from the region. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that trade among Asean countries amounts to no more than 17 percent of their total commerce. Further, PTA covers only two percent of intra-Asean trade. [14] What makes the PTA more farcical is that majority of the commodities which have benefited from tariff cuts are "either of minimum benefit in terms of trade potential, such as snow ploughs, or can be found outside the region(s)". [15]

The failure of PTA is due to the fear that liberalization will exacerbate the uneven distribution of costs and benefits among Asean member-states. The poor members of the bloc, for example, would be rendered poorer "because of the backwash effects arising from the operation of a pricing mechanism which may provide allocation efficiency without promising equity in development". [16] The same fear also affected the integration of EEC agricultural trade. While in the latter's case, those countries that lost out in the agricultural pricing scheme are compensated in the other sectors, Asean gives no similar compensation so its member-states cannot help but compete.

The economic dependence of Asean countries on the world market of goods and capital further blocks regional integration. The general decline in the price of their exports and the growing protectionism of their First World trading partners only force Asean countries into further competition in the world market.

Some argue, however, that the success of Asean should be measured not in terms of intra-Asean trade, but in its strength as a bargaining forum for better trade deals with First World countries. This is true to a certain extent. Asean has definitely won better trade deals than the other regions in the Third World, e.g., South Asia. This is because Asean members bargain as a bloc rather than as individual states. Its bargaining power, however, has yet to match that of Japan and South Korea whose exports enjoy a strong position in the markets of advanced industrialized countries.

It is also observed that Asean got relatively better deals not because it is a strong bloc, but generally because of the rapid economic expansion of some of its members. Singapore, for example, has long been categorized as a newly industrializing country (NIC) while Thailand and Malaysia are viewed as potential NICs. Further, Asean external bargaining only exposed more cracks in the bloc. In the 1987 GATT talks, for instance, Asean took the lead in forming the Cairns, an informal association of 14 countries (including Australia, Canada, Brazil, and Argentina) which is committed to phasing out agricultural export subsidies. The divisions within it, however, soon became evident when the Reagan Administration unveiled preparations to phase out, within ten years, all subsidies affecting farm products. Thailand immediately supported such a move because it weathered the slump in the world market more successfully than its Asean partners did. The Philippines, on the other hand, argued against the Reagan proposal because of the drastic fall of its sugar exports, a major dollar earner for the country. [17]

Other intra-Asean agreements which were designed to strengthen the bloc have also been considered failures. The Asean Industrialization Complementation Scheme (AIC), for example, was first conceived to "develop links in certain industries to achieve greater economies of scale". [18] This was also intended to allow "the exchange among member-countries of products manufactured by existing or new industries through preferential tariff fiscal incentives and liberalization of foreign exchange regulations". [19] But until now, one has still to see the implementation of such a scheme. Its first project, i.e., the creation of an Asean car, was preempted by the Malaysian government's decision to produce its own Proton Saga vehicle. [20]

Another scheme, the Asean Industrial Joint Venture (AIJV), an offshoot of the AIC, was conceived in 1983. It required private investors from at least two Asean countries to invest in a joint project. The cumbersome implementation of this

scheme and the insufficiency of existing tariff policies, however, limited its success. [21]

A third Asean scheme, the Asean Industrial Project (AIP), suffered the fate of the AIC and AIJV. The AIP was an attempt to establish large-scale industrial projects with a regional market. Asean member-governments, however, were accused of not having the political will to see this project through.

Some believe that the poor performance of Asean as an economic bloc has been somewhat minimized by its "achievements" in the political sphere. Asean is said to have evolved into a venue for regional reconciliation. This is evident in its strong and unified position on some regional issues such as the Kampuchean conflict. For almost a decade now, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has been supporting the Asean resolution condemning the "Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea", and has refused to give the Heng Samrin government a seat in the Assembly.

The Kampuchean issue, while uniting the Asean members, has recently become a source of tension within the bloc. With the announcement of Vietnam's withdrawal from Kampuchea, some have argued that Asean has lost its reason for being. This view of the region's usefulness (or lack of it) has been reinforced by Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan's meeting in Bangkok last January with Vietnamese-backed Premier Hun Sen. This meeting was part of the Thai leadership's effort to establish commercial links with Vietnam. Such a move was not received well by the other Asean member-states. Singapore, for instance, remains wary of Vietnamese military intentions in the region.

Another issue that has caused splits within Asean concerns the United States bases in the Philippines. The retention of the bases is strongly opposed by some members of the Philippine Senate and several nationalist organizations. The Aquino government, however, maintains a vague "keep-options-open policy" with

regard to these facilities. This led Singapore to offer to "temporarily" play host to the bases if the Philippines no longer wants them. This offer was not met warmly, particularly by Indonesia and Malaysia, who consider it part of Singapore's drive to strengthen itself militarily.

Other divisive political issues that Asean members still have to settle include the Sabah question, which involves the Philippines and Malaysia; the Muslim struggle for secession in the Philippines, which concerns Malaysia and Indonesia; and the struggle over the Spratley Islands between, for instance, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Thus, it is doubtful whether Asean can achieve enough political unity to provide the basis for its further consolidation. This differentiates Asean from the EEC. The latter is able to provide a strong basis for unity which compels the various sectors of the European Community to go along with its integration efforts. The different sectors in Asean, on the other hand, have yet to be convinced of the bloc's economic and political value. For instance, those business groups that have been tapped by their respective governments to support the three Asean intra-government strategies -- the AIP, the AIC, and the AIJV -- have not been very enthusiastic over these efforts. The inability of Asean governments to provide the proper foundation for regional cooperation has been preventing it from inspiring grassroots participation in Asean.

Integrating the European Trade Unions into the Community

In March 1973, the European Trade Union Conference (ETUC) was set up by the members of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) in Europe, i.e., from the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). This group later included the European affiliate of the World Confederation of Labor (WCL) and the Confederation Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL). [22]

Several factors compelled European trade unions to organize at the regional

level. First, EEC programs affect the income and free movement of European labor. Numerous Community directives oblige EC member-states to reform their national laws and regulations affecting workers' rights, e.g., the right to be informed, consulted, and compensated when a business is about to be shut down. [23]

Another factor which gave rise to Euro-trade unions was the need to counteract the merger of national business corporations as embodied in the EC's Customs Union and other policies affecting the region's enterprises. [24] The workers realize that it is only by uniting at the regional level will they be able to develop a strong bargaining leverage vis-a-vis their employers in the Community. This particularly became a necessity because of the formation of a strong pressure group of employers at the regional level.

Also, by closing ranks, European labor can bargain from a position of strength with the European Community and the other pressure groups within it. Initially, the European trade unions spoke through the ICFTU, WCL, CGIL, and the Confederacion Generale du Travail (CGT). The formation of the ETUC, therefore, now allows them to speak with one, powerful voice. [25]

And lastly, an increasing interdependence has developed among European nations so that not one national government can singlehandedly respond to a regional environment that is confronting economic troubles, technological advancement, social problems, and political changes.

The current aims of the ETUC are:

- 1) the representation and promotion of the social, economic, and cultural interests of workers at the European level and in relation to the policies of the European Community, the EFTA, and the Council of Europe, which are based in Geneva and Strasbourg, respectively.

- 2) the consolidation of the trade union movement within Western Europe,

especially in counteracting policies of multinational corporations which are inimical to their interests. ETUC emphasizes that it is European- rather than Community-oriented. [26]

3) the solidarity of ETUC, ICFTU, WCL, and WFTU with Third World trade unions to help the latter organize, and gain more jobs and better wages and working conditions. [27]

The ETUC currently feels that they have gained some headway with regard to the formulation and implementation of certain Community policies on crucial issues, such as those concerning mass dismissals, the European Social Fund (ESF), and social security benefits for migrant workers. [28] The EC, for example, has vowed to safeguard workers' rights in the event of mergers, transfers, or amalgamations of firms. [29] Equal pay and improvement of the living and working conditions of the Community's workers have been legislated. [30] The European Currency Unit (ECU) is now recognized as a legal form of payment. This currency has not only helped the development of a European monetary system, but also set a precondition for the

reduction of unemployment in the region. It was also one of the major catalysts of the unification of Europe. [31]

There are still, however, several demands which have been left unattended to by the Community. One demand is for workers to have a financial stake in the enterprises. [32] Another is for the participation of trade unions in the administration and functioning of EC institutions, e.g., the ESF and the European Center for Vocational Training. [33] Finally, there is a demand for improved social security benefits for migrant workers and equal wages for men and women. [34] The ETUC is, nevertheless, satisfied with its achievements in the Community as they have emerged as a potent Euro-group to contend with.

The Repression of Trade Unions in Asean

Trade unions in Southeast Asia, unlike their counterpart in Europe, are not integrated into the Asean. One might say that this is certainly not a loss for the unions considering that Asean is perceived to be inutile, i.e., it cannot influence the labor policies of its member-states. In any



case, labor and business confrontations occur at the national rather than regional level given that national businesses have yet to organize themselves as a regional pressure group. Southeast Asian workers, therefore, do not feel compelled to unite at the regional level. In fact, there is competition among them as their governments, as in the Philippines and Malaysia, are pursuing a policy of labor-export to ease unemployment and debt fatigue. [35]

Majority of these trade unions demand economic rights, e.g., the right to just and higher wages, and political rights, e.g., the right to organize and intervene in government decision-making. But they are rarely heard by their respective governments which, historically, do not encourage people's organizations and action. It is difficult to imagine, therefore, the consolidation of labor at the regional level as their attempts at uniting at the national level are immediately crushed by the state.

In Malaysia, for example, labor organizers may be detained without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA) of 1960. [36] Under the amended version of the Act, if these organizers are ever put on trial in violation of the ISA, the government may "remove the power of judicial relations from the courts". This effectively blunts every check to the abuse of power and creates a psychological deterrent to mass organizing and intervention in government decision-making. For labor, in particular, these repressive laws prevent it from organizing to defend and advance its interests. Thus, in 1982, Malaysian lawyers and international visitors, like the International Mission of Lawyers to Malaysia, revealed that Malaysian trade unions are regulated at every level. [37] It was also noted that in 1980, under the amended Trade Union Act, the Registrar of Trade Unions was elevated to the position of "Labor Supremo" with the power "to arbitrarily de-register unions, interfere in the administrative functions of trade unions and prevent or prohibit industrial actions in furtherance of a legitimate trade dispute". [38] It is no wonder, therefore, that only 25 percent of workers in Malaysia are unionized and their main federation, the

Malaysia Trade Union Congress (MTUC) remains too weak to fight the government's repressive labor policies. [39]

Workers in Indonesia suffer similar repression. The American Federation of Labor - Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), noting the oppressed state of the Indonesian workers, twice petitioned for the removal of Indonesia from the list of countries eligible for US tariff waivers under the Generalized System of Preferences. (They sent their petition first to the US Department of Trade and then to Trade Representative Carla Hills.) [40] The ICFTU and the International Labor Organization have also accused the Suharto government of "anti-union" and other discriminatory acts. [41]

In the Philippines, Marcos assured foreign and local investors of the docility of Filipino labor by imposing repressive labor policies. The Aquino government is pursuing labor policies that are not widely different from Marcos'. Under this government, Filipino workers remain grossly underpaid and unable to fully express their demands. Their wages are now subject to market forces, making them vulnerable to the excess in the supply of labor. Their right to strike has been severely regulated by the introduction of additional requirements. [42]

The labor movement in Thailand, compared to that in Malaysia and the Philippines, is considerably weaker. Thai politicians and state officials can easily buy the silence of the unions by promising their workers higher wages or jobs in the bureaucracy. [43] These unions are unable to pressure the government into implementing minimum wage regulations, or to launch strikes in defense of the workers' interest. [44] Their existence is at the behest of the Thai government which, through the Registrar, can dissolve labor unions or prevent workers from participating in or becoming leaders of unions. Under the circumstances, only house or company unions are able to exist without threat from government. [45]

Given the tremendous difficulties they encounter at the national level, workers in

the region, therefore, cannot be expected to organize at the regional level. Although some of them are members of international trade confederations like the ICFTU, their international affiliation has not enabled them to influence the labor policies of their respective governments. Asean has not been helpful in this area. In fact, its member-states invariably practice union-busting. As a result, workers in the region are doubtful of the continuing relevance of Asean to their lives.

European NGOs and Their Views Towards the Third World

European non-government organizations (EC NGOs) compose another important grassroots sector in the European Community. As a Euro-group, NGOs primarily undertake development efforts in the Third World. In general, their perspective is not shared by the agricultural Euro-groups that are at the forefront of campaigns in the Community to put up protectionist barriers against the agricultural exports of Third World countries. European trade unions and their umbrella organizations, on the other hand, join the NGOs in their solidarity with the workers of the Third World, although there are some unions that advocate protectionist policies detrimental to the interest of the Third World.

In opposing protectionism in the developed countries, EC NGOs argue that the latter policy would result in the decline not only of Third World economies, but, over the long term, also of the economies of Europe. They explain that the collapse of the Third World would result in the erosion of the purchasing power for First World or European commodities. With the shrinking of the market for European goods and services, Europe will have to decrease production. The latter measure would inevitably lead to further unemployment. This spells economic instability and political unrest. Taking the longer view, therefore, European aid or assistance to the Third World, especially in the area of trade, is good for the economy of the Community.

Given the above perspective, European NGOs have introduced in their respective governments and in the European Community the following approaches towards the achievement of their objectives:

1) sending emergency relief aid to parts of the Third World where this is urgently needed;

2) educating peoples of the Third World into becoming self-reliant and self-sufficient so that they shall cease being mere passive recipients of relief aid; and,

3) empowering the people of the Third World by enabling them to participate in every economic and political activity that shapes their lives. Underlying this approach is the belief that there cannot be economic progress without genuine democracy. [46]

In 1976, European NGOs established the EEC - NGO Liaison Committee (LC). This Liaison Committee serves as the venue for discussions among EC NGOs on the priorities of any given form of assistance from the Community. At the moment, there are around 500 organizations in the Liaison Committee that are engaged in overseas projects, food aid, emergency assistance, and volunteer work. [47]

The Liaison Committee also facilitates discussions and cooperation between its member NGOs and the different institutions of the European Community. It holds regular dialogues with the various Director-Generals of the European Commission and other Community institutions in the hope of influencing Community policies. Largely due to the efforts of the Committee, the European Parliament adopted in 1987 several resolutions supporting NGO activities in Europe and the Third World. [48] *Euroaid*, one of the adhoc committees of the EEC-NGO LC, is considered one of the most significant food-aid lobby in the European Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the European Commission. [49]

In 1976, the Community began co-financing NGO projects in Europe and the Third World. Through such efforts, the

Community joins the European people, although on a non-official basis, in their solidarity with the peoples of the Third World. [50]

The Liaison Committee also holds regular dialogues with other Euro-groups, particularly those that advocate policies detrimental to the interests of the developing nations (e.g., COPA/COGECA).

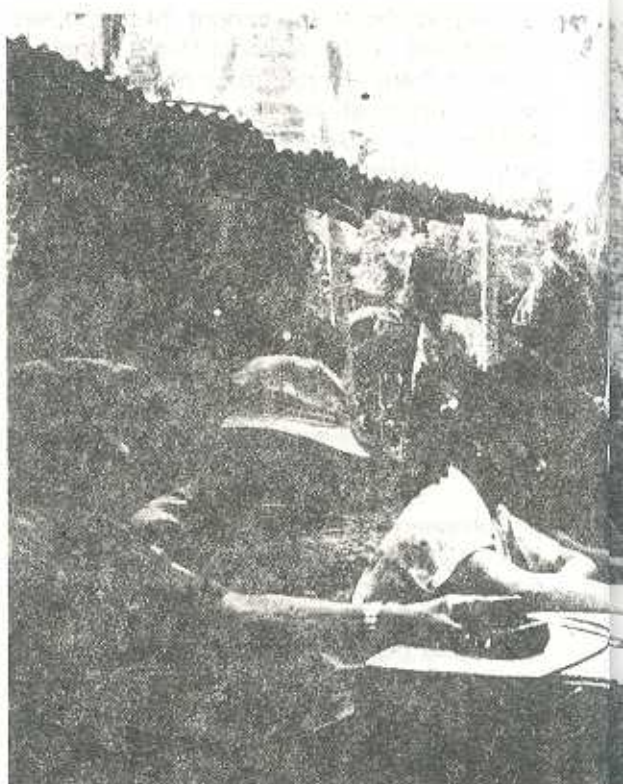
The Liaison Committee also engages in the conscientization of the European people with regard to the problem of Third World underdevelopment. For example, the EEC conducted a European-wide development education on the impact of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) on the Third World countries. Together with the European Parliament, the Liaison Committee in 1988 organized a public awareness activity on North-South problems.

With the active participation of the NGO Euro-groups in the Community, as enhanced by the establishment of the EEC-NGO Liaison Committee, the European people have come to appreciate the Community as a venue for the articulation of their aspirations and solidarity.

Asean NGOs as Alternative Venues for Development

Non-government organizations in Southeast Asia influence, to some degree, development efforts in the region. They provide an alternative channel for the delivery of social goods and services to the weakest section of society. Compared to government organizations and official development agencies, NGOs are seen as more efficient and sincere in their development work.

Moreover, NGOs provide venues for self-organization. In this sense, NGOs are instruments for popular empowerment. [51] They are viewed, especially by donor countries and groups, as agents of grassroots pluralism and change. [52] In fact, "many of the more radical social organizations and protest movements have also adopted a voluntary and non-party NGO form". [53]



Asean NGOs either directly represent grassroots movements or link donors to the target population. [54] In some countries like the Philippines, most NGOs are involved in development programs that provide financial and technical assistance to micro-entrepreneurs composing the bottom 40 percent of the population. [55]

Some Asean governments tap NGOs for the implementation of development policies. International donor institutions, like the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Bank (WB), have come to view NGO work as complementary to official development projects. This belief, however, is not completely shared by most Asean governments which consider NGO activities subversive, especially if these challenge the status quo.

In the Philippines, the military has openly accused certain NGOs of channeling funds to the National Democratic Front (NDF) and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). The military also impli-



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cated certain European donors, such as the Netherlands, whose Embassy in Manila was then compelled to deny the accusation that the local projects it co-finances with Dutch NGOs are channeling funds to communist insurgents. In Indonesia, the government had warned NGOs against exposing the country's human rights record.

Unlike the European NGOs in relation with the EEC, NGOs in Southeast Asia maintain their distance from Asean because they find most government development policies unpopular, even unjust, as these only reinforce dependence on exports and foreign capital. They want, instead, their economies restructured towards self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Also, they experience state harassment, especially when they begin demanding for more political space. Further, they differ radically from their government in their views on such pressing issues as human rights, militarization, and inequality.

Although they hesitate to become integrated into the Asean, NGOs in Southeast Asia collaborate with each other not only in their development work, but also in their campaigns on common issues concerning the environment, women, peace, etc.. In establishing networks across the region, NGOs may very well be planting the seeds of a genuine, democratic, and people-oriented cooperation in Southeast Asia.

Conclusion

EEC and Asean both aim to foster regional integration/cooperation. They differ, however, in the pursuit of this goal and the support of their peoples. Specifically, the EEC, compared to Asean, puts more premium on the participation of the people in the regional integration process. Also, while Asean member-states adopt only those policies that strengthen their respective economies in the world market, EC member-states allow their policies to be determined by the regional bloc and not by national consensus or international pressure.

The EEC exercises considerable influence as a regional bloc. It enjoys the European peoples' confidence as it is often used as a venue for the resolution of local issues. It tolerates, and even accepts to a significant degree, the participation of Euro-groups in regional affairs. The Asean, on the other hand, is not as influential as a regional grouping. It does not elicit similar involvement from the people. It may even be considered isolated from the Southeast Asian people as its member-states continue to pursue undemocratic national policies.

Notwithstanding their unsatisfying experience under Asean, the people of Southeast Asia still believe that the issue of underdevelopment may be resolved through a regional forum. It must, however, be a forum that is initiated and sustained not by the elites in the region but by the people. At the base of genuine regional integration/cooperation is popular democracy and empowerment.

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29. *Ibid.*
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31. *Europe*, 27 May 1988.
32. Kirchner, p. 44.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 81.
35. Mar Kalaw Jr., "Asean Members Compete for Labor Markets", *Manila Chronicle*, 4 October 1989.
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