

ROLF HANISCH, *Philippinen*. (Beck'sche Reihe 816). München: C.H. Beck, 1989. 149 pages, 8 illustr., 2 maps, DM 17,80

The explicit aim of this book is to elucidate the geographical, historical, sociological, economic and political backgrounds of the problems of the Philippines (p.2). It is precisely this that the author accomplishes. In less than 144 pages the reader is given an idea of the sad plight of the Philippines that appears as a country where almost every enterprise is doomed to failure. The book spotlights poverty and exploitation, injustice and unrest, civil war and the population explosion, the burden of debts and miscalculations. The result is a picture of the political economy of the country past and present.

According to the author, the Philippines is a society in transition in which capitalist relations of production are growing more and more persistent (p. 57). From this point of view poverty and misery can be systematically explained. Still, the author would not like to appear dogmatic in his approach. In subordinate clauses and short excursive paragraphs he often offers alternative aspects that place the difficulties of the Philippines in the context of the problems of development in the Third World. Consequently the book provides the background materials necessary to understand the international media reports on the country.

The book is less helpful towards understanding a Manila daily because Philippine culture - the way Filipinos live, what they talk about, how they think - remains almost totally in the dark. Their problems do not seem to have a cultural component. For this reason it is a book about a country without people, or, as is explained on page 2, "Whoever ... wants to get to know the amiable and openminded people, should not neglect their problems". And so it remains problems only.

The appended discussion of current literature (pp. 145-8) introduces the more interesting Philippine newspapers and journals and serves as a guide to literature in German and the documents dealing with the Philippines contained in libraries throughout the Federal Republic. It is a pity that the author was not aware of the fact that since 1987 the study of the Philippines has been enthusiastically promoted at the University of Bielefeld and the university library already contains an impressive stock of relevant literature. Hanisch's plea for increased interest in Philippine studies in West Germany (p. 14) thus seems to be being gratified.

*Niels Mulder*