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## The Philippines Between 1929 and 1946

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*boo Dancers*, Joaquin's *Woman*, and Kerima Polotan's *The Hand of the Enemy*.

Mrs. Casper's novel sets certain precedents that are bound to affect subsequent efforts in the genre. While its distortions of history appear ill-advised, its use of actual historical documents (drawn principally from Blair and Robertson, XLVII and XLVIII) points a direction worth pursuing for its value as discipline for creative writers in general, and for the rich material it offers the Filipino writer in particular. At a symposium on Philippine writing in 1964, Fr. de la Costa had occasion to decry the lack of a historical perspective among our writers. *The Peninsulars* is the first of Philippine novels to correct such lack. One may hope that as the body of Filipino historical novels increases, our English writers' sense of alienation from the past will begin to decrease. Then the Filipino writer will cease to feel apologetic when his use of a foreign language is questioned. For indeed, there are many ways the returning native can take toward home. The use of our history opens one of them.

BIENVENIDO LUMBERA

### *The Philippines Between 1929 and 1946*

IN the past decade there has been an increase of historical writing about the American presence in the Philippines. Prior to this awakening, the role of the United States had all but been forgotten by Filipino and American historians. And one of the most neglected areas was the Commonwealth era: its formation, its problems, and its agony under the Japanese heel. Professor Theodore Friend's study\* is the first in recent years to analyze and evaluate the events in the

\* BETWEEN TWO EMPIRES: *The Ordeal of the Philippines*, 1929-1946. By Theodore Friend. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965. x, 312 pp.

Philippines between 1929 and the lowering of the Stars and Stripes on July 4, 1946. His work is also the first to use key manuscript sources in Manila and Washington.

There have been other studies of the Philippines since the formation of the Commonwealth. Grayson Kirk described the factors in the United States that led the American Congress to vote independence for the Philippine Islands. The late J. Ralston Hayden, who was Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, wrote several excellent articles on the Philippines. But his most illuminating study was his detailed monograph on the national development of the Philippines. Although his work is now some twenty-five years old, it is still an important contribution to our understanding of the political development of the Philippines prior to and during the Commonwealth era. The most cited study of the whole of the American experience was co-authored by Professors Grunder and Livezey.

Each of these, however, was based for the most part on published materials, although Hayden's work was solidly founded on personal observation, together with years of research and government service in the Philippines. Professor Friend's monograph, however, is grounded on extensive manuscript research in private and public collections in the Philippines, Japan, and the United States. He was able to use material which was unavailable when Professors Kirk and Hayden wrote their studies.

The three major repositories of information relative to Fil-American relations which Dr. Friend consulted were the National Archives (Washington), the Manuscript Division (Library of Congress), and the Quezonian Collection (now housed in the National Library, Manila). In fact, those of us who are concerned with contemporary Philippine history owe him a debt of gratitude for having "discovered" the papers of the late President Quezon which were rotting away in Old Bilibid. His concern and that of other historians for the preservation of the Quezon manuscripts has led to efforts to safeguard what remains of the papers. These papers are the largest single

source in the Philippines for Philippine history between 1901 and 1944.

As Professor Friend informs us in his Preface, he is writing only the history of a limited but unusual period of Philippine history. He has chosen the Great Depression as his starting point because it heralded the start of a series of concerted American efforts to rid the United States of the Philippines. It was also the time when serious Filipino efforts were begun in the independence fight.

For the author, the ordeal of the Philippines was its premature birth into the economic, social, and international chaos of the 1930's. This, in spite of his obvious dislike of American sovereignty in the Philippines, was a dis-service to the Filipinos. The Americans had failed the Filipinos. The ordeal of the Filipinos under the Japanese is more than evident.

But if the ordeal of the Filipinos under American sovereignty is apparent to Dr. Friend, it is not so to this reviewer. What occurred in the Philippines during the Commonwealth era—the lack of military defence, the inability to readjust the Philippine economy, and the centralization of power in the hands of the chief executive—were the result of Filipino mis-management and then secondarily American misrule. As Professor Friend knows, or should know, American imperial responsibility for the day-to-day governance of the Philippines ceased with the passage of the Jones Act (August, 1916). And imperial responsibility for the long range problems of the Philippine Islands became impossible after that organic act. In fact, we can say that the Filipino leaders ran the Philippine government after 1916. The fact that there was an American governor general merely prevented the Filipino leaders—Osmeña, Quezon, and Roxas—from being the chief executive. This, however, did not stop them from governing the nation as they saw fit. True, they were not absolute masters in their own house. Yet, they were never hamstrung as were the nationalists of India, French Indo-China, and the Netherlands Indies.

The Filipino leaders were warned over and over again by the American governors general—Forbes, Harrison, Wood, and

Stimson—and by the Chief of the Bureau of Insular Affairs (General McIntyre), as well as other interested Americans, about the state of Philippine military preparedness, the lopsidedness of the Philippine economy, and the seeming lack of Philippine democracy. Forbes, Harrison, Wood, and Stimson urged, each in their own way, the Filipino leaders to seek the diversification of the economy, to develop economic stability, and to create an economy which could exist independent of the United States. Wood, in particular, argued that Philippine independence without adequate military defence would be unthinkable. During his tenure he made every effort to induce the Americans as well as the Filipino leaders to come to grips with the problem of military preparedness. He gave special encouragement to the cadet corps of the Filipino universities. Harrison and Wood were both concerned with the need for a viable two-party government in the Philippines. Each encouraged the growth of Filipino participation in government. Both strove to bring the leadership to the acceptance of the concept of two-party government, the ideal of loyalty to nation over party, and the participation in government by qualified men. That the two-party system failed to mature in the Philippines is not the result of any inability of the United States to understand the Filipino psyche. The failure of the two-party system was due more to the political attractiveness of the “independence issue” which precluded an effective opposition party than to any basic disagreement with the concept of the two-party system.

If the Americans knew “what was right” for the Philippines, then why, it might be asked, did not Washington force Filipino acceptance—the Jones Act notwithstanding? To have forced military preparedness upon the Filipino leadership, to have forcibly diversified the economy, to have thrust a working two party system upon the Filipinos would have been unthinkable for the United States, especially after the Filipinos made it plain they wanted to do things their own way. Moreover, Washington had been committed since 1907 to the policy of the Philippines for Filipinos. And from 1916 onwards the United States pledged itself to independence—the when

was not as important, it would seem to the Filipino leadership, as the promise of eventual freedom.

The ordeal of the Filipinos under the Commonwealth was not the result of problems inherited from "direct" American rule. Those problems were self-induced. They could have been cured anytime the Filipino leaders set their energies to the solution of those problems. *If* there was any ordeal under the Stars and Stripes between 1929 and the outbreak of war, it lay in the Filipino leader's awareness of the shallow reasoning behind the efforts to get rid of the Philippines. The Filipino nationalist after a generation of arguing for "immediate, complete, and absolute independence" found himself thrown into the chaotic world of the 1930's unprepared. Ill-prepared due to his own leadership than to some American misrule.

Professor Friend's book is divided into five parts, together with a Prologue and Epilogue. Parts Two, Three, and Four deal with the various attempts to resolve Fil-American differences, the independence acts, the formation and problems of the Commonwealth, as well as the trials and tribulations of the charismatic Manuel L. Quezon. Part Five covers the Japanese occupation. And the first part tries to put the study within the Philippine setting. The last four parts are the strongest. Professor Friend wrote extensively about the Commonwealth era prior to his book.

Part One, together with the Prologue, in the opinion of this reviewer, does not give a complete and balanced view of the American role in the Philippine Islands prior to 1929. While it is true that the author warned us that he did not intend a full treatment of the American interlude in the Philippines, still the truncated version he gave his readers leaves much to be desired for those of us who are students of Philippine history.

There seems to be a belief, or, at least, that impression is given, that the United States ruled the Philippines, especially after 1916, in much the same way that imperial Britain, France, and The Netherlands governed their respective colonies. This, as we have seen, was hardly the case. It would

have taken only a few more pages to review the development of Philippine self-government prior to 1929 in order to show how much autonomy the Filipino leadership held in the management of their own affairs. In doing so, the reader would have appreciated much more the responsibility of the Filipinos for some of the impasse that existed over the issue of independence.

There also seems to be an exaggerated concern over racism in the history of America's relations with the Philippines. It was no doubt a very distasteful facet of Fil-American relations—one which appears from time to time to disturb even present-day relations. But the fact that some Americans practiced racism in the Philippines and that few Americans married Filipinas should not be disturbing. Racism was part of the mystique of imperialism, it was part of most white men's attitudes in colonial areas, it was the accepted norm of the day for most Americans whether at home or in the Philippines. Moreover, why should the American colonial administrator or soldier like the Filipino? The Filipino nationalist made it painfully obvious that freedom was what he wanted. Why should the American have married a Filipina? His government pledged itself to Philippine independence. The Filipino nationalist was hostile to him. Why not go home and marry—home was only three weeks away. If the Spaniard over the centuries grew to "like" the Indios and married them it was because Spain was very distant and he knew that the "Islas Filipinas" would be Spanish forever. In short, the Spaniard, to some extent, could identify with the indigenous population. The Philippines could become his homeland. The Americans never had the chance or the time. That many American administrators genuinely liked the Filipino people and that some made their destiny in the Philippines despite obvious handicaps is a tribute to their ability to overcome racism. Professor Friend, it would appear, worries too much about racism. It was there, it is true, but the Filipino leadership learned how to live with it.

Leonard Wood, for the author, is the epitome of American imperialism in the Philippines. In view of recent articles about Wood, it would seem that a different interpretation of Wood

and his role in the Philippine Islands might have suggested itself—even if only to note its existence. According to a Philippine senator, we are told, Leonard Wood was incapable of a “government by compadres” (p. 31). What Professor Friend failed to appreciate, and this is strange, is that the Filipino senator in relating this to acting Governor General Gilmore was in fact inflating the ego of the governor, as well as perpetuating the Filipino charge of Wood’s so-called temperamental nature. As Dr. Friend should have recalled, having gone through the Quezon manuscripts as did this reviewer, there was a concerted effort by the Filipino leadership after Wood’s death to maintain that he was ill-suited to be governor general. In fact, Gilmore at one time thought he might get the “nod” from the leaders. And the only reason General McCoy was unacceptable (p. 41) to the Filipinos was because of their *inability* to *justify* his acceptability, especially after his close identification with Wood. There is no need, however, at this time to “tilt at wind-mills” for Wood. But it would seem in the opinion of this reviewer that Wood deserved better than the usual stereotype treatment. But then Leonard Wood is the *bête noire* of American imperialism in the Philippines.

Aside from the above-mentioned comments, one must be impressed by the work of the author. This monograph should be read by all students of Philippine history. It is hoped that this study will be the first in a series of re-evaluations of Filipino nationalism, economic growth, and democracy in the light of their American and Japanese experiences.

MICHAEL PAUL ONORATO