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Dramatic Struggle:

Little Brown Brother: How the United States Purchased and Pacified the Philippine Islands at the Century Turn

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DRAMATIC STRUGGLE

LITTLE BROWN BROTHER: HOW THE UNITED STATES PURCHASED AND PACIFIED THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS AT THE CENTURY'S TURN. By Leon Wolff. Garden City, N. Y. Doubleday, 1961. 383 pp.

This is a semi-popular account of the American venture into imperialism at the close of the nineteenth century: the annexation of the Philippines, followed by four years of war to destroy the First Philippine Republic and establish American sovereignty. The story is interestingly told, and though the author is not a professional historian, he has made good use of the sources, both American and Filipino, though he unfortunately limits himself to those in English among Filipino accounts.

The picture of the drift of events in the United States during these years is well drawn. Both popular and official sentiment evolved from a more or less disinterested desire in 1898 to bring liberty to Cuba, renouncing any gains for the United States, to a stage of somewhat veiled imperialism, and finally to an openly annexationist policy in the Philippines. At the same time, the writer gives due emphasis to the earnest anti-imperialism of a large minority of Americans who, for various motives, opposed both the war and the annexation.

In a concluding note Wolff sums up his own judgment of the Philippine-American conflict:

. . . that the Spanish-American War which preceded it was unnecessary, that the Filipinos were indeed capable of self-rule, that in any event the problem was not ours, and that their forcible annexation was a moral wrong . . . (p. 366).

With this conclusion, as he notes, most historians would agree substantially today. It is undoubtedly true, as the book indicates, that complete American withdrawal from the Philippines would almost certainly have led to European or Japanese attempts at domination, and this was an important factor in determining American annexation. However, little or no effort was made to negotiate an American protectorate, which, as the author points out, would probably have been acceptable to many of the Filipino leaders, who were torn between their desire for national independence and their realization of the danger from the European Powers or Japan.

Unfortunately the opening chapter, in which the author gives the background to the American entry into the Philippines, is not so successful as the rest of the book in its accuracy or objectivity. The portrayal of three hundred years of slavery under the *encomienda* system (p. 16), filled with revolutions whose suppression meant mass

executions and overflowing jails (p. 17), besides containing errors of fact, extends conditions which existed at certain periods of the sixteenth or late nineteenth centuries to the entire 350 years of Spanish domination. A similar ignoring of differences of time leads to an unjust and inaccurate portrayal of the friar lands problem. Historical accuracy will not permit such a total condemnation of all Spanish colonial and religious policy for three and a half centuries any more than it will justify a defense of the whole of the Philippine political and religious set-up during these centuries. Moreover, the desire for vividness in narration and uncritical acceptance of polemical accounts lead to a number of assertions and descriptions of at least dubious accuracy. Such are some of the details of Rizal's execution, the supposed revelation of the Katipunan by a woman in confession, the declaration that Primo de Rivera pocketed the rest of the money supposed to go to Aguinaldo and the Filipino exiles in Hong-kong.

Apart from this introductory chapter, however, the story is told with fairness and accuracy, as well as with vividness and interest. Though it does not provide any new information on the events, it is a readable presentation of a dramatic struggle. One final minor criticism would be the rather frequent misspelling of Spanish and Filipino names. Though without footnotes the book has a bibliography and index.

JOHN N. SCHUMACHER