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**Democracy Survives  
Crusade In Asia: Philippine Victory  
by Carlos P. Romulo**

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# Book Reviews

## DEMOCRACY SURVIVES

CRUSADE IN ASIA: Philippine Victory. By Carlos P. Romulo. The John Day Company, New York. 1955. Pp. 309. ₱10.80.

The Philippine Republic began its independent existence in 1946 with very serious handicaps. Three years of Japanese occupation had wrought havoc with its economy and exercised a demoralizing influence on its people. A number of outstanding political leaders had collaborated, openly or covertly, with the enemy. Those who took part in the resistance movement had acquired habits of deception and violence which were not necessarily laid aside at the termination of the conflict. Illegal authority abusively imposed by the occupying forces had generated in the general population a deep suspicion of or a cynical contempt for authority as such.

Postwar reconstruction was slow and erratic. Considerable funds were poured into the country by the United States in the form of emergency aid, war damage compensation, and payments for goods and services. But these funds, instead of being invested in restoring the productivity of the land and increasing industrial capacity were largely dissipated on consumers' goods and luxury items in a frantic postwar "buying spree."

Rigged elections and the spoils system placed government in the hands of irresponsible and unscrupulous men who exploited public office for private gain. Fabulous fortunes, deviously accumulated, were lavishly squandered in the capital city; while ordinary citizens, stretched on the rack of rising prices and falling incomes, looked in vain to their government for a remedy.

Under such conditions a communist seizure of power had every chance of success. The Communist Party in the Philippines was not, numerically speaking, a very large one; but it was tightly disciplined, brilliantly led, and had at its command a military force seasoned in guerrilla warfare. It saw its opportunity; it struck; it failed. The thing was close, and the danger is by no means over. But the Republic survived.

How it survived is the argument of General Romulo's book. It was the common people themselves, according to General Romulo, who set their own house in order by acting for the most part independently of their political leaders. After the "dirty elections" of 1949, the general revulsion of feeling against graft and corruption in government became so strong that the professional politicians had perforce to give way before a new, more responsible and public-spirited type of leadership. These new leaders were for the most part of humble origin, the most conspicuous among them being the present Chief Executive, whose reform of the military establishment contributed so largely to the containment and eventual liquidation of the Hukbalahap as an organized force.

Another outstanding example of the new leadership was (and is) Senator Lorenzo Tañada. His part in restoring public confidence in the processes of democratic government was surely considerable. It is therefore somewhat disconcerting to find no mention of him in General Romulo's account.

This may be due to the self-imposed limitations of the narrative, which is written from a frankly personal point of view. "I am writing in the disliked first person," the author says, "because to me the struggle against Communism has been a personal story, and I can tell it in no other way."

A personal narrative with its inevitable gaps and omissions, its emotional overtones and occasional oratorical flourishes, is bound to be disappointing to the reader who wants an objective and factual treatment covering all the relevant aspects of a given subject. It may well be argued, however, that such a treatment is impossible, or at least extremely difficult, where the subject treated concerns events of the immediate past, especially if they are events in which the author himself had been intimately involved. Even so practised a historian as Mr. Winston Churchill writes of the Second World War with less than olympian detach-

ment. It is, then, scarcely to General Romulo's discredit if in this regard, along with so many of his illustrious contemporaries, he falls short of Thucydides.

H. DE LA COSTA

## TOO MUCH MANILA

EDUCATIONAL ENGINEERING. By Dr. Domingo Soriano. Manila: Bookman. 1954. Pp. xviii-151. P4.00

Commenting upon the administrative structure of certain European countries, particularly that of France, Kandel has these illuminating remarks to make:

Neither the contribution of centralized control to building up systems of education nor their efficiency up to a certain point can be denied, but the defects of centralization outweigh the advantages, for while it secures uniformity it breeds inertia and destroys that spirit of initiative which keeps education alive... (*Comparative Education*, p. 210)

Like numerous other thoughtful Filipinos, Dr. Soriano considers the intense centralization of our own Philippine public school system a deadweight that has outlived whatever value it may have possessed in 1900. For more than ninety years now the government schools have been conducted largely by edict from Manila with increasingly serious ill-effects both upon the Philippine people's personal character and upon the nation's over-all development.

Conspicuous among these pernicious consequences is passivity. Our public school teachers, for example, have become, under the pressure of the prevailing paternalistic autocracy, mere receivers-of-orders. Indeed, so thoroughly dominated by their superiors do they seem to be that they cannot manage even their own guild, the Philippine Public School Teachers' Association. The Superintendents must do it for them. A similar type of coma appears to have settled over the children; for, under the rigid restrictions of nation-wide uniformity imposed by the Central Office in philosophy, curriculum, and in methods, the progress of the country's individual children, even in the basic knowledge areas and skills, has dropped to an appallingly low level.