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Hukbalahap Movement: Born of the People by Luis Taruc

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rather effectively the shakiness of Mrs. Jenkins' foundation in the history of Philippine-American relations, especially of the strong nationalistic movement that effectively sought, fought and gained independence for the Philippines. A thorough study of this would, I believe, show that the pattern of economic and political independence was discussed thoroughly in the spirit of *quid pro quo*, and that the eventual result came from a meeting of minds to achieve a common purpose.

GREGORIO V. ROMULO

HUKBALAHAP MOVEMENT

BORN OF THE PEOPLE. By Luis Taruc. International Publishers, New York. 1953. Pp. 286.

An autobiography of Luis Taruc, this book necessarily tells much about the Hukbalahap. In fact after the first few pages we learn little of the particulars of the life of Taruc, the book being dedicated solely to the history and workings of the Huk movement up to the first year of Quirino's presidency.

Taruc—or whoever prepared the book for him—has learned well the science of Communist propaganda. He exaggerates, misinterprets and twists facts to suit his convenience. His thesis: The Huk is inexorably marching to complete victory just as the present "puppet" government is marching to its doom. Proof: Because this is the spontaneous movement of the *tao* who after centuries of subjection is at last coming to his own.

There are exaggerations, understatements and out-and-out lies which anyone in the country will see through and which seem to suggest that this book was written primarily for foreign consumption. Among other things the author's condemnation of the landowning class is too sweeping, his criticism of the government machinery and processes of justice too narrow, his story of the Huk's part in the liberation of the Philippines too fantastic, his tale of American imperialism dripping with the Moscow brand of prejudice. From the start he splits the country into two parts: the Huk and the non-Huk, the former being subtly referred to always as the "people" "patriots" "peasants"; the latter the definite minority as the "collaborators" "puppets" "imperialists" who betray the "people" at every turn.

San Fernando. There must have been more elsewhere—unfortunate victims of Japanese reprisals.

“Second, the development of an economic program . . .” After the farmer had filled his quota of “voluntary contributions” as often as three times over, leaving the poor man wondering how he could tide his family over the next harvest, the squadron would come and “buy up” the farmer’s “excess supply” at four to eight pesos a cavan, when the market price might be twenty-four. And then the starved Jap army came to loot and steal what was left and the people could only look on.

“. . . and third, the putting of new political perspectives for the people that would be a factor in a democratic Philippines at the end of the war . . .” In the concrete it meant indoctrination in Communism. Lectures and discussions went on incessantly on topics that ranged from imperialism down to details like calling everyone “cayabe” (comrade) instead of *Mister*. “. . . a continual struggle went on to eradicate traces of feudal mentality.”

“Most significant of all the innovations made by the BUDC was in the administration of justice. All cases, whether criminal or civil were settled in the barrio, by the council . . .” The council, of course, was chosen out of the best indoctrinated members of the community. And so it turned out that when the Huks accused anybody before the council, it was practically the Huks who passed the sentence over their victim. A member of this council admitted at that time to the reviewer that he had voted the death of his own granduncle. “But what could I do? I couldn’t expose my own children to their sure reprisals.” The Huks had found a most efficient machine for doing away with undesirable elements and it was at the same time a most convenient scapegoat for their crimes.

“On January 28, Casto Alejandrino had been elected provisional governor of the province . . .” The reviewer made inquiry even then. He couldn’t find a single man who had voted. Not even the barrio people knew that there had been an election of their own town mayor, let alone of the provincial governor.

One whole chapter is devoted to the help and welcome the Huks gave the Americans. The people of Minalin, Pampanga, will tell how they were upbraided in a public meeting the very day after the Americans entered the place, because by going wild with joy over the coming of the Americans they had shown their absolute lack of “the spirit of the movement.” They were told that these Americans had come five years too soon, that, as it was, “we” were yet unprepared to take over.

Taruc accuses the other side of terrorism in the 1946 elections. The people know better. In the reviewer's own barrio, people were roused out of their sleep in the middle of the night before the elections, herded into one place and warned to vote for Osmeña or else . . .

He says that after the liberation the "people"—always again meaning Huks—organized their squadrons anew to protect themselves against the PCs and the American liberators. He doesn't mention that the very barrios which had for years been organized under the BUDC, once they were able to obtain arms, used this very organization against the Huks and kept day and night watches against the Huk squadrons. When one looks at this move of the barrio man in the light of its risks on the one hand and of his proverbial unwillingness to do things for himself on the other, one can see its full significance.

Through the whole book Taruc does a lot of wishful thinking. He sets down in retrospect the story of his movement, as he now sees it should have been done and the way it would have turned out. He pretends to have followed consistently to the end the technique of friendship toward the peasant—a technique which in truth he seems to have started with in 1952, but which for lack of time he soon abandoned for the swifter policy of intimidation.

But for all its faults this book has one valuable feature, if one can be patient and objective enough to wade through the mud of Communist propaganda to get it. The book catches the *tao's* strong desire to rise out of his age-old poverty and ignorance and meet the world around him on an equal footing.

That Taruc's type of leadership has gone ahead of us to take the *tao's* hand is a damaging commentary on our democracy and perhaps on our Catholicism too. That this leader has fumbled with his unique first chance to win the undying devotion of the *tao* is, however, our supreme luck.

But our luck cannot last forever.

All the idealizations in this book are probably one proof that Taruc has realized his mistake. And for all we know his late surrender and confession of guilt may be his way of formally resuming his technique of friendship.

The thoughtful reader will close this book with some serious self-examination.

BASILIO DAVID