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Nur Misuari: An Authorized Biography by Tom Stern

Book Notes

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Nur Misuari: An Authorized Biography

Pasig City: Anvil, 2012. 229 pages.

Tom Stern's biographical account of Nur Misuari comes at a crucial point when Moro history needs to be revisited and the lives of its key personalities call for reappraisal. Nur Misuari is the founding leader and central committee chairman of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF). Twenty-three chapters comprise the book's contents, along with five appendices that present important documents that defined Misuari's political career, such as the Tripoli Peace Agreement and the 1996 Peace Agreement between the MNLF and the Philippine government. Stern, who is a California-based medical doctor and a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University, consulted key personalities who worked with (and against) Misuari at the height of his career: Pres. Fidel V. Ramos, Imelda Marcos, and Sultan Esmail Dalus Kiram II. Chapter 1 sets the tone for the biography by recounting Misuari's acceptance of the Unesco Peace Prize in Dakar in 1998. Beginning with Misuari's childhood and his early political career, the author narrates the political and intellectual maturity of an eventual leader of a secessionist group. Awakened by the Jabidah Massacre, Misuari led the formation of an armed insurrection among the Moros in Mindanao during the martial law years. The author also narrates Misuari's role in the onset of negotiations with the government, the break between the MNLF and the MILF, and the changed political atmosphere following the rise to power of Pres. Corazon Aquino. Misuari's relations with the succeeding presidents, most importantly with Ramos, form the content of the subsequent chapters. Chapter 16 presents a radical turn in Misuari's trajectory as he became a government official in his capacity as governor of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The last two chapters present the author's view regarding the future not just of Misuari but of the larger peace process in Mindanao.