

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

The Twisted Road to Freedom, by Carison

Review Author: Ritche B. Elot

Philippine Studies vol. 45, no. 4 (1997): 586–587

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Yuk-wai comes to the conclusion that the war had not much of an impact to the Chinese community.

The three years of Japanese Occupation was more an interruption than a transformation of the history of the Philippine Chinese. After the unsettled years of 1945-1946, the Philippine Chinese community was largely restored to its form of the prewar era. The traditional allocation of power, the conflicts and alignments of various groups and the economic and social structure inside the Chinese community remained basically unchanged. (183)

Yung li Yuk-wai admits that her attempt at studying the Chinese resistance movement in the Philippines is not a finished work. Much is needed to be done in this field of Philippine Chinese history. However, the book has done an invaluable service to the Chinese and the larger Philippine community by filling in the gaps in this particular segment of our country's history.

Conrado E. Olazo, S.J.
Loyola House of Studies
Ateneo de Manila University

The Twisted Road to Freedom: America's Granting of Independence to the Philippines. By Keith Thor Carlson. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995.

Despite the prior publication of several accounts of Philippine independence, the book of Keith Carlson remains original and informative. It views the decolonization of the Philippines on 4 July 1946, from the inter-relatedness of the issues of trade and collaboration, and the human factors involved in the process. The book suggests two compelling issues preceding the granting of independence. First, the controversial trial of collaborators and second, the legislation and enactment of the Trade Act in connection with the rehabilitation program.

The Filipino upper class continued their domination over their own lower classes by collaborating with the Japanese forces in World War II. When the Americans returned, then President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared that those who assisted the Japanese during their occupation would be stripped of economic and political influence. But it did not come as easy as that. General McArthur, the appointed military advisor of the Commonwealth who had full discretion in the postwar governance of the Philippines, was a *compadre* of the collaborators, headed by the prominent Manuel Roxas. McArthur re-kindled old friendships and did the collaborators an incredible favor by helping them dominate the country again.

There were anti-collaborationist forces, however, who stepped in, hoping to frustrate the maneuvers of McArthur and the collaborators. Harold Ickes, chairman of the department overseeing American territories and protectorates, and Sergio Osmeña tried to bring the major collaborators to the American courts, arguing that the Filipino People's Court created by Paul V. McNutt, the High Commissioner to the Island, was badly disorganized and their investigative facilities practically nonexistent. Unfortunately, this move was unsuccessful. The counter-argument was that persecution of collaborationists in the United States would entail distrust of the Philippine judicial system. Thus, the United States established an independent Philippines, but with a feudal economy led by fascist collaborators. The collaborators remained untouchable.

With Manuel Roxas as the new president, American Trade and Rehabilitation remained the prevalent issue to be settled before the July 4 independence deadline. Two different legislations were presented: one reestablishing the reciprocal free trade authored by Congressman Jasper Bell, and the other, declining trade preferences drafted by Senator Millard Tydings. Bell's bill introduced the "parity clause" that allowed American businessmen the right to "exploit and develop natural resources on an equal footing with Filipinos" (12) and that the Philippine economy would be "preserved" exclusively for American exports. Accordingly, this would make the Philippines a safe and attractive investment for American entrepreneurs.

Tydings, on the other hand, argued that one could not in reality be free "when one's blood is hooked to the economy of another country by the laws of another country (111)." He suggested declining trade preferences to gradually wean the Filipinos away from relying on special treatment. In the end, in spite of local uproar against the exploitative and undemocratic parity clause, the Bell's Trade Bill was finally approved, concluding that Tydings' bill was too complex to deal effectively with Philippine rehabilitation. But above all, what seemed to be the main factor in Bell's legislation was the support of local officials. Lastly, what emerges from this book is a revealing tale of interdepartmental rivalries, competing private corporate and national interests, cross-cultural confusion, and personality conflicts of both the local and American officials.

The book has reasonably shed light on a previously unexplored aspects of Philippine independence. It inadvertently rebuffs the argument of both the early historians describing the United States's policy of decolonization in the Philippines as an act of benevolence and the economic nationalists' calculation of the policy as simple exploitation of the Philippine economy. Keith Thor Carlson based his research on declassified American documents and private papers of the key American officials involved in the decolonization process. Thus, the book is objective in its approach and an interesting material for contemporary readings on Philippine independence.

Ritche B. Elot