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The Philippine Independence Mission to the United States 1919-1934

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as a missionary among the Bikolanos. Fr. Melendreras was a priest-poet who, by the evidence of the body of poetry he left behind and the testimony of his contemporaries, was a lover of nature, from flowers to volcanic eruptions. Among the papers he has left behind is the *El Ibal* from which Fr. Castaño took the poem he inserted in his report on Bikol (p. 155). And Fr. Melendreras was the sole author of *El Ibal* (p. 154).

En conclusion, apoyandonos en los testimonios y razonamientos hasta aqui expuestos, creemos que, mientras no se aduzcan pruebas mas convincentes en contrario, ha de tenerse por verdadero y unico autor del Ibal al P. Bernardino Melendreras (p. 176).

Dr. Manuel's survey of Philippine folk epics in 1963 and Jesuit Father Francisco Demetrio's 1979 "Overview of Philippine Epics," (*Kinaadman*, vol. 1, pp. 9-28), say that the Christianized Filipinos have only *two* folk epics to show because whatever epics they may have had before Christianization were "displaced" or "swallowed up" by the metrical romances (Manuel, op. cit., p. 10) or the *pasyon* (Demetrio, op. cit., p. 16). The book under review says only *one* remains: *Lam-ang* of the Ilokanos.

Obviously, this monograph may disappoint some Bikol enthusiasts, but it may strengthen the thesis of Manuel and Demetrio on literary displacement. This is the latest in the series of works by various scholars that demythologize documents of Philippine political and cultural history.

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THE PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE MISSIONS TO THE UNITED STATES 1919-1934. By Bernardita Reyes Churchill. Manila: National Historical Institute, 1983. xv, 442 pages, plates, appendices.

The Philippine independence movement during the first third of the twentieth century is rightly considered unique in the history of colonies. Die-hard nationalists notwithstanding, there was much altruism in the unprecedented policy of the United States government to assume jurisdiction over the Philippines in order to prepare it for independent statehood. Everyone knows that this was not the exclusive motivation. But one cannot close his eyes to the reality that the Philippine republic was born through peaceful, legal arbitration and not by means of bullets spilling blood across battlefields. Ms. Churchill's *The Philippine Independence Missions* is an analysis of part of that movement. Twelve chapters of varying length present in clear detail the chronology of the effort to transform a dream into reality.

The author shows her mastery of the sources and the pertinent literature. I suggest, however, that it would certainly have enhanced the value of this book had she added in a separate section a critical essay evaluating this material, considering the often impulsive and emotional reaction among the Filipinos whenever Philippine-U.S. relations are mentioned. Not every Filipino is sophisticated enough to realize that most of this writing is partisan. More often than not, much anti-American animus is born of ignorance.

Like an *obligato*, a triple theme runs throughout this episode of Philippine history: the American Republican party's conviction of Philippine unpreparedness for self-government; the double-talk of the Philippine political leaders openly advocating immediate and absolute independence, but fearful in private lest the American government take their words seriously; and the *insouciance* of the general run of the Philippine population regarding their political fortunes.

The author is at her best when she narrates the political skirmishes preceding the various attempts to pass a Philippine independence law as they are revealed in the unpublished diaries, *mémoires*, and cablegrams exchanged between the parties involved. It is from these sources that, with the other scholars writing before her, she points to the duplicity or lack of candor of Manuel L. Quezon and the other political leaders, who conveniently used the independence issue to promote their own ambitions.

As long as the Republicans were the majority party in Washington, Philippine independence remained a remote possibility. In their mind, the Philippines was not ready, economically or otherwise, and the Filipinos themselves had not yet mastered the art of self-government. This may be true, but there is evidence that the Filipino political leaders would have settled "for less — perhaps no more than an American recognition of the Filipinos' right to independence" (p. 5). But precisely, the American government refused to concede the point, at least, by explicitating "its intentions as to the future status of the Philippines" (p. 5). If one adds to this the clamor for more Filipino participation in decision-making, one understands why the policy of "indefinite retention of the Philippines with undeclared intention" (p. 5) was galling!

This is the context in which the idea of sending a special independence mission to the United States was first conceived. On 7 November 1918, an Independence Commission was formed by concurrent resolution of the Philippine National Assembly. The following day, at its first session, the possibility of a special mission to Washington was discussed and, a week later, it was approved by an act of the Legislature. As announced, the Mission was to seek to strengthen the bonds of mutual trust and good will between the two countries, and to promote fuller commercial relations based "upon ample and durable foundations" (p. 10). The issue of independence was not mentioned explicitly lest the real purpose be known before it was discussed with the president of the United States, a precaution that fooled no one.

The Independence Mission was ill timed. To accommodate itself to the schedule of the American president on his way to the Paris peace conference after the first world war, it postponed its departure from the country. When it finally reached Washington on 3 April 1919, it found an indifferent although not a hostile audience. The Americans were in the midst of postwar reconstruction, and the Philippines was not their most important concern. Because the Republicans controlled Congress, the Mission played up the Philippine debt of gratitude to the U.S. government rather than independence, the main reason for their coming! Two weeks later, on 18 April, the Mission was disbanded. As a reward for their efforts and expenses (the members of the Mission received a daily stipend of \$100), the American president wrote them a politically innocuous letter assuring them that the future of the Philippines was not alien to his trip to Europe, and that since the Islands were practically independent, the time for their full independence had already come.

By July 1919, Quezon, head of the first Independence Mission, arrived to a festive welcome in Manila. Subsequently he reported that the Americans had endorsed the Filipinos' desire for independence and that "the work of the Mission had only begun and must be continued to its final conclusion." (p. 25) Churchill notes that there was much skepticism and political opponents were loud in their criticism (it was an election year).

Other independence missions followed, the last two being the best known: the OsRox Mission of 1931-1933, which obtained the Hare-Hawes-Cutting law; and the last independence mission led again by Quezon, which led to the Tydings-McDuffie law in 1934. Everyone knows the two bills were essentially the same, with one big difference. The HHC was an achievement of Osmeña and Roxas, while the TMcD was Quezon's, by which he successfully upstaged his political rivals.

It would be simplistic to seek to qualify those missions merely as successes or failures. This fails to account for all the factors, not the least of which was the personality of the individuals involved, especially Quezon, the acknowledged leader of the movement, and a man "far more complex" (p. 295) than many seem to realize. One can indeed say the independence movement "brought the Filipinos' petitions or the Philippine issue directly to the American government for open and frank discussion . . . an issue that Americans could not ignore" (p. 298). One might even add, with the author, that the "attainment of independence through prolonged parliamentary process influenced Philippine political development profoundly" (p. 298). The question, however, is how? In what sense was this influence exercised?

The record states that the formation of a Committee on Independence and the decision to send a special Independence Mission to the United States was an act of legislature. It perhaps would be interesting to qualify the fact. One must remember that in 1903, when Filipinos were given suffrage, only

2.44 percent of the population were qualified to vote. For the election of the National Assembly of 1907, voting rights were granted to Filipino males, at least twenty-three years of age, who could speak, write, or read English or Spanish, who had been either a *gobernadorcillo* or a deputy town magistrate. Twelve or fifteen years later, how much had the Filipino electorate and Filipino political leadership matured? There is evidence that the Philippine National Assembly up to the Commonwealth period was what might be described as a "*laissez-faire*" legislature. Acting under the supervision of the American government, always having to reckon with the American President's veto power, the tendency among the general membership of the Assembly was to relinquish the basic duty of enacting laws for their country and merely second what their leaders proposed for approval or disapproval. On the other hand, the data do not permit one to say that the body was merely a rubber-stamp Assembly. Whatever the situation was, however, when one considers this factor, it is easy to understand the unusual situation where apparently none of the Filipinos, except a few politically impotent figures, seemed to have realized the need for greater economic development in the country before launching it as an independent nation. The cry of the hour was for independence at all costs.

These observations do not weaken the main thrust of the book. The author has chosen a "primarily chronological" (p. xi) analysis, which is its strong point and its weakness. Strong point, because it offers to the reader a clear sequence of the events; weakness, because certain important factors which could have added depth to the narrative have been either glossed over or omitted altogether.

Printing errors do not totally distract the reader, but there are enough of them to call his attention to them. One also wonders whether some of the lengthy footnotes could have been incorporated into the text itself.

These are minutiae which a second edition should correct. All in all, Bernardita Churchill deserves congratulations for having pushed forward a little further the frontiers of Philippine historical knowledge.

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