

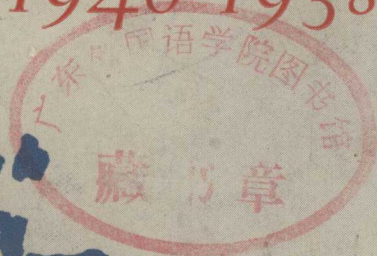
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Robert Aura Smith



*PHILIPPINE
FREEDOM*

1946-1958



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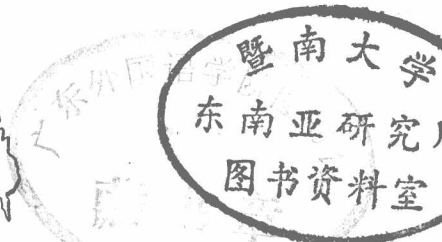
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PHILIPPINE FREEDOM, 1946-1958

INTRODUCTION

The sudden death of President Magsaysay, just a little more than ten years after the Philippines had attained political independence, seemed to many persons to mark the end of an era. To most Filipinos it seemed an almost unbearable national calamity.

This tragedy focused attention on the Filipino people and their problems. It was necessary to review and to judge what had been done by them and by their American associates, in the light of all that had happened. After Magsaysay's death there was some taking of inventory, some attempt to balance the books. This wasn't "the end of the world," as some Filipinos said they felt it to be. But it was one of those stopping places, where there is a pause for breath and reflection.

What had been carried out in the Philippines by Americans and Filipinos was an unusual political and social experiment. An attempt had been made to bring together a diversity of motives in some sort of program for progress. The Filipinos had agreed, reluctantly at times, to channel their sense of nationalism into a productive and conservative course. The United States had pledged, on the other hand, that the validity of the claims of this nationalism would be respected and that its goals would ultimately be achieved.

The form of this "revolt" against "colonialism" was unique. It came to be, in the end, a joint effort of two peoples to bring about a relationship that would be fruitful to both. It was also an effort to set up in Asia a working democracy

grounded in concepts that were not entirely Asian. It was an effort, often unconscious, to bring about a better synthesis of East and West. Individual Filipinos and Americans, in their relations with each other, often sensed this. Translating this sense into large political forms was a different and sometimes more difficult matter.

In the end, the political goal was reached—and not, as has too often been suggested, merely as a product of war. It was the product of an evolutionary process that would have come to its eventual fruition regardless of external disruptive forces. Philippine independence and freedom were not born on Bataan. They were born in the minds of Filipinos and Americans who had worked during long years for their ultimate consummation.

What would happen after this end was achieved was a matter of interest and concern. Could the Filipinos sustain the new responsibilities that they had so joyfully assumed? Was it possible to establish in Asia a different type of government and a different type of relationship between the rulers and the ruled? Had the periods of trial and error been really profitable? Could the great “Asian experiment” succeed?

These were the questions that the first decade of Philippine independence was required to answer. And the first decade was turbulent, unhappy, and insecure. It came to an end with the death of the one man, Magsaysay, who seemed to hold up, in his person the highest hopes of success. It was only natural that when he died it should be asked, “Can the great experiment go on?”

The pages that follow are an attempt to answer some parts of that question. Necessarily, they must trace the origins of the concept of Philippine freedom. They must show what had been tried and what had been done. They must attempt to obtain focus and perspective. The present derives from the

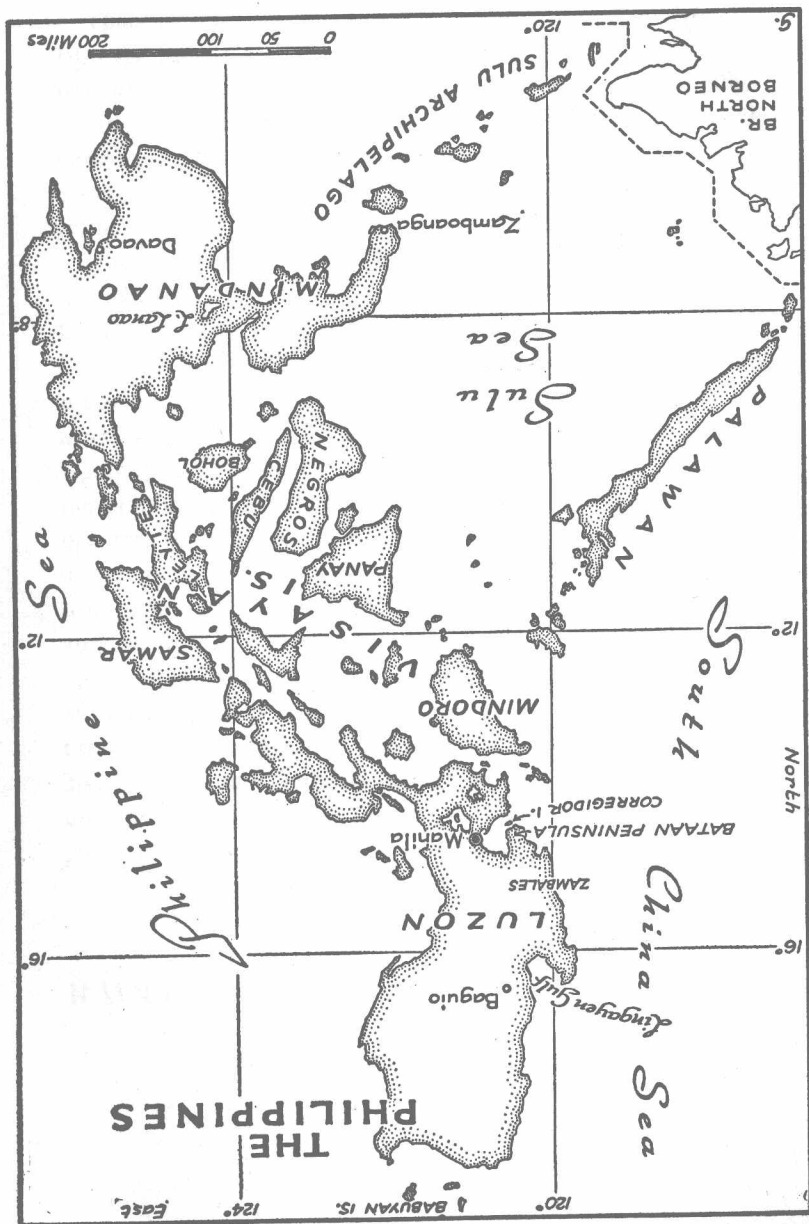
past. One decade does not stand alone. But one decade can be a revealing period of demonstration.

If the relationship of Filipinos and Americans has been unique, it has also been singularly rewarding. Out of the welter of cross-purposes, conflicts, and misunderstandings, out of the trials and perils of charting new courses, out of the very adjustment of East to West and West to East, has come a new conception of fraternity and joint dedication. We are no longer strangers to the Filipinos, nor they to us.

What has prevailed is a great idea. It has been recognized and embraced. Men can be free, and rejoice in their freedom. They can work for, and fight for, that freedom. They may come from the nipa houses of Luzon or the cottages of Vermont, but they can be brothers. This we have learned.

It should not be unprofitable, therefore, to trace some of the elements in our learning. To that end this book is dedicated.

PHILIPPINE FREEDOM, 1946-1958



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WHAT MAKES MEN FREE?

If we wish adequately to understand and assess what has been happening in the Philippines in the past decade it may be useful, first, to take a somewhat longer backward glance. Philippine independence and freedom were not the product of accident nor did they come into existence in a vacuum. There is a broad background for what has taken place. It is a background of ideas and events, of purposes and aspirations, of growth and change. Concerning that background there are pertinent questions that may well be asked. What makes the Filipinos free? What makes any people free? What were the aims of the American occupation of the Philippines and what was the character of the people with whom it was obliged to deal? What were the instruments that were used to make possible the development of a self-governing nation and how were they used? When we have given an at least partial answer to such questions we will be in a better position to look more closely at the dramatic events of this last decade.

The whole question of human freedom is immense in its scope and at no time in history has it been more widely discussed than now. We have even reached a point in this discussion at which we actually designate, conventionally, a large number of states and societies as the "free" world. In that free world this is usually juxtaposed in speech and thought with the "non-free," or "slave" world.

There is, however, much confusion in the use of terms. We

are confronted with two great political movements that dominate the scene. One is the rise and spread of a political system and ideology that denies certain privileges and modes of behavior that much of the Western world has come to associate with the "rights" that go with human freedom. Therefore it is often called a Communist "conspiracy" against liberty. The other is a world-wide movement toward a change in political status for many peoples from a dependent to a nondependent position. This is usually called the "rise of nationalism."

A part of the Communist conspiracy has been the effort to equate this struggle for a change in status with the urge for liberty as such and thus to permit the Communist protagonist to appear as the champion of "freedom." This has resulted in the insistent appeal to "anti-colonialism" and "anti-imperialism" as the backbone of the propaganda directed by the Communists to dependent areas and to those who have recently emerged from the dependent status. It has therefore been possible for those whose basic tenets deny what we usually think of as human freedom to appear as the spokesmen for liberty against a reactionary world.

We are prone to assume that the falsehood of the Communist position should be apparent. We are likely to become impatient with those who accept as defenders of "liberty," in the name of "anti-colonialism," the very forces that deny liberty on all other grounds. There is confusion in our minds as well as in the minds of those who are swayed by the Communist appeal. We, and they, are in need of clearer thinking.

All over the world men have been saying, "We wish to be free." The Buryats on the Manchurian border proclaimed their own little republic thirty years ago. The Indonesians rebelled against the Dutch, and subsequently some Indonesians rebelled against other Indonesians. India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon changed their political relationship to

the United Kingdom. Malaya and Singapore are achieving self-government. Indo-China has ceased to be French. The free state of Ghana has emerged in Africa and changes are in the making for the Rhodesias, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Kenya. Mandates in the Middle East that resulted from the First World War have been liquidated and we now deal with the independent nations of Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, and Iraq. Britain is out of Egypt and the Sudan condominium is gone. The status of Libya, Tunisia, and Morocco has been changed. In other areas, such as Nepal, a "protectorate" has given way to a changed international association in which the achievement of real self-government is the avowed aim.

Highest in this list of changes in status is the Philippines. It was the first of the dependent states in our time to become an independent republic. As such, it deserves especial attention.

It is significant that there has been, parallel to this growth, a progressive loss of freedom in the other half of the world. The Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania have been swallowed up. Bulgaria, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Albania have lost their power to act as independent states. Poland and Yugoslavia have been struggling for some degree of freedom of action, against heavy odds. Red China cannot be said to be truly "independent" of the Soviet Union, while northern Korea and northern Vietnam are obviously puppets.

Thus, while millions of persons have been gaining their "freedom" in the name of national independence, other millions have been losing it. Political structures alone obviously cannot answer the basic question that we have posed: What is it that makes men free?

Perhaps the most widely quoted answer to that question is the one given by Jesus, who said: "Ye shall know the truth

and the truth shall make you free." And Jesus was speaking in an atmosphere of political as well as of religious controversy. In our day, moreover, more and more persons play the role of Pontius Pilate and ask, "What is the truth?" The question is neither cynical nor idle. If the truth is to make us free, we need to know what is the truth, and we need sorely to be convinced of those things "on which we have believed." What Jesus did, however, for his time and for ours was to take the question of freedom out of the field of politics and into the field of morals. This is where it ultimately belongs. To "know the truth" is not merely a political problem. It is a moral challenge.

This is a point at which confusion has arisen. In dealing with the political problems of dependent areas it has been common practice to use "freedom" and "independence" synonymously. This, as we have now discovered, can be mistaken. There are non-independent areas that are certainly "free" and there are "independent" states that are anything but that. Some of the blame for the confusion of terms should probably attach to newspapermen. They have to write headlines. "Independence" has eleven and a half type units; "freedom" has seven and a half. It is often all too convenient to use the shorter word.

But there is a broader context. "Freedom" is one of those "loaded" words. It has the same sort of impact as "home," "mother," or "honor." It carries emotional overtones in a way that mere technical terms cannot possibly do. Thus, Gandhi and Nehru did not describe the contest with the British as "the struggle for the evolution of constitutional self-government in India" (which would have been entirely accurate); they spoke of "our Fight for Freedom." Similarly, the battle cry of the Indonesians in opposition to the Dutch was always *Merdeka* which literally means freedom.

Parenthetically, in this connection it is interesting and possibly significant that the Filipinos did not make this confusing error. They never shouted for "freedom." It was always *independencia*. There was at no time anything called a "freedom" party in the Philippines. There were simply *Nacionalistas*.

The Filipinos seemed to avoid, almost by instinct, the wrong synonymous use. Of course, they could have seen that there were or had been many politically independent states in which true human freedom was nonexistent. Nazi Germany, Imperial Japan, and the Soviet Union were conspicuous. In those cases political independence had by no means made men free. On the other hand there have been politically nonindependent areas, such as Canada prior to the Statute of Westminster of 1931, or the Philippines during the reign of the Commonwealth, in which there was human freedom in all its aspects. Indeed, it is not too much to say that in some countries that have become independent there is probably less actual freedom now than there was under a colonial status. Indonesia is a case in point.

The distinction between the two terms is revealed by the correct application of each: "independence" is a term in the field of law and politics that designates the relationship of one sovereign state to other sovereign states; "freedom" is a term in the field of philosophy and morals that designates the relationship of the individual to the society in which he lives.

On the other hand, the two terms are not necessarily contradictory. Political independence may be an important step toward freedom itself. The very pride in political independence may be used as a means of emphasizing the meaning of freedom itself. But the two should not be confused. The achievement of political independence does not solve the problems that are implicit in the struggle for human freedom,

as many nations have discovered. Neither does the continuation of a dependent status, in itself, mean the denial of that freedom.

Here we must go back to some fundamental concepts. Men are free primarily as they think, believe, and feel that they are free. They are not free when they are convinced that political structures or social institutions inhibit the exercise of what they believe to be their "natural rights." It is not necessary to go into an abstruse philosophical discussion of what such rights are, or even, in fact, whether they actually exist. Men all over the world are convinced that they are endowed with such rights and that structures of government and society must ultimately come to respect them.

The rise of nationalism in our time—and especially in Asia—is, in its essence, an assertion of the conviction that these human rights may not be respected by an alien sovereign power and that their exercise and defense should lie within the indigenous society. This conviction may not always be literally true, but it is philosophically sound. It embraces a respect for so-called "customary law" in some areas, but it goes far beyond that. It is an insistence that a national or social group that can recognize its own identity and that wishes to preserve itself has the inherent right to make its own laws and to abide by them. With this there can be no just quarrel.

THE CONCEPT OF JEFFERSON

It was on those grounds that Thomas Jefferson set forth the philosophy of independence and freedom in what was to become one of the most important documents in the history of the struggle for human liberty, the American Declaration of Independence. It was obvious, from the outset, that there was no confusion in Jefferson's mind between freedom and

independence since the terms are not used interchangeably in the Declaration. Moreover, its very conclusion is that the colonies were and of right ought to be free *and* independent states.

The Declaration was based, in turn, upon the conviction that a dependent status made impossible the exercise of what were held to be "natural" human rights. It cannot have been accident that priority was given to the right to make one's own laws. There were eighteen specific charges of abuse leveled against the rule of King George III. Of these, eleven had to do with the making of laws, and in each case it was charged that the right of the colonies to legislate for themselves had been denied or impeded. This making of laws was, in Jefferson's mind, held to be manifestly a "natural" right and a necessary part of freedom.

At the beginning of the Declaration, however, Jefferson laid out his case upon an even broader ground. First of all, he spoke of "one people" who were dissolving political bonds that had connected them with another. Such a people are entitled, he went on, to a "separate and equal station," by virtue of "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." Then came the most celebrated passage.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal. . . ." Jefferson has been many times misinterpreted on this passage: it has been said that he declared that all men were equal when it was obvious that they were not. The misinterpretation is a double one. In the first place it was not stated that these were self-evident truths, but simply that they were held to be self-evident by the signers of the Declaration and the "one people" whom they wished to represent. This is not the promulgation of a dogma, but a confession of faith. Similarly, it is not asserted that all men are equal, but that they are "created" equal. The equality