



*UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II*

The War in the Pacific

TRIUMPH IN THE PHILIPPINES

*by*

*Robert Ross Smith*



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# UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II

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. . . to Those Who Served



## Foreword

From the moment of his departure from the Philippines in 1942, General MacArthur was determined to return to the islands and restore the freedom of the Philippine people. Capture of the main island of Luzon in 1945 substantially realized this goal. How his armies accomplished it forms the body of the story unfolded in this volume.

In some respects the Luzon Campaign repeated the pattern of Japanese conquest three years earlier, although with action on a much larger scale and for a much longer period. Unlike the Japanese conquest, the operations of 1945 involved a fierce month-long battle for Manila, the only such protracted action by U.S. forces in a big city during World War II. It also involved a complicated and costly reduction of three mountain positions into which the Japanese withdrew, in one of which there was still a substantial core of resistance when Japan surrendered.

Within the broad scope of this work, covering the intensive operations of two armies for seven months, the author has necessarily concentrated on what is most instructive and significant to the outcome. The clarity, thorough scholarship, and careful mapping of this volume should make it especially useful for the military student, and all who read it will benefit by the author's forthright presentation of this dramatic and climactic story of U.S. Army operations in the Pacific war.

Washington, D.C.  
15 March 1961

JAMES A. NORELL  
Brigadier General, U.S.A.  
Chief of Military History



## The Author

Robert Ross Smith received a B.A. and M.A. in American History from Duke University. A graduate of the Infantry Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1943, he served on the staff and faculty of the Special Services School at Washington and Lee University and then, for two years, was a member of the G-3 Historical Division at General Douglas MacArthur's General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area. He presently holds a reserve commission as a lieutenant colonel of Infantry.

Mr. Smith has been with the Office of the Chief of Military History, either as an officer on active duty or as a civilian, since January 1947. His first book in the series THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II, *The Approach to the Philippines*, was published in 1953. He is currently working on his third volume for the series, *The Riviera to the Rhine*. Mr. Smith's other works include an essay in *Command Decisions* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1959, and Washington: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1960); an article on tactical supply problems in *Military Review*; the article on the Pacific phase of World War II in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*; and an account of the Battle of Ox Hill (1 September 1862) in *Fairfax County and the War Between the States*, a publication of the Fairfax County (Va.) Civil War Centennial Commission.

## Preface

*Triumph in the Philippines* is the story of the largest joint campaign of the Pacific phase of World War II. Devoted principally to the accomplishments of U.S. Army ground combat forces and to the operations of major organized Philippine guerrilla units that contributed notably to the success of the campaign, the volume describes the reconquest of the Philippine archipelago exclusive of Leyte and Samar. The narrative includes coverage of air, naval, and logistical activity necessary to broad understanding of the ground combat operations. The strategic planning and the strategic debates leading to the decision to seize Luzon and bypass Formosa are also treated so as to enable the reader to fit the Luzon and Southern Philippines Campaigns into their proper perspective of the war against Japan.

For the forces of General Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area the reconquest of Luzon and the Southern Philippines was the climax of the Pacific war, although no one anticipated this outcome when, on 9 January 1945, Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger's Sixth Army poured ashore over the beaches of Lingayen Gulf. Viewed from the aspect of commitment of U.S. Army ground forces, the Luzon Campaign (which strategically and tactically includes the seizure of Mindoro Island and the securing of the shipping lanes through the central Visayan Islands) was exceeded in size during World War II only by the drive across northern France. The Luzon Campaign differed from others of the Pacific war in that it alone provided opportunity for the employment of mass and maneuver on a scale even approaching that common to the European and Mediterranean theaters. The operations of Lt. Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger's Eighth Army, both on Luzon and during the Southern Philippines Campaign, were more akin to previous actions throughout the Pacific, but the southern campaign, too, presented features peculiar to the reconquest of the Philippine archipelago.

*Triumph in the Philippines* began as the joint effort of two authors, myself and a former colleague, Dr. M. Hamlin Cannon. Before completion of the manuscript's first draft, Dr. Cannon accepted another position and the task of completion and revision fell upon my shoulders. I had access to Dr. Cannon's draft chapters, which proved valuable guides to research and which helped me avoid many pitfalls. A detailed discussion of all source material is to be found at the end of the volume in *The Sources: A Critical Note*. For this preface it is sufficient to state that the only limitation on access to or use of records concerned questions that could be shown to have

an obviously and directly adverse effect upon national security and national policy.

In 1957 the Office of the Chief of Military History made it possible for me to revisit the battlefields of Luzon. This permitted me to make many important revisions based upon an invaluable firsthand examination of much of the terrain involved in the Luzon Campaign and enabled me to complete substantive work on the volume early in 1958.

It is impossible to list all who made significant contributions to the preparation of *Triumph in the Philippines*, but it is incumbent upon me to single out those who provided help and guidance above and beyond the call of duty. Heading the list are the nearly eighty officers or former officers of the Army, Navy, and Air Force whose time and patience in reviewing all or parts of the manuscript produced valuable information and many provocative ideas. It was especially gratifying to find busy men in important posts taking pains to submit comments—for example, the Honorable Hugh M. Milton II, former Under Secretary of the Army and during the Luzon Campaign the Chief of Staff, XIV Corps. Similarly, General George H. Decker, Chief of Staff, U.S. Army, and formerly Chief of Staff, Sixth Army, on Luzon, provided a collection of papers that proved especially valuable in analyzing the problems of XI Corps during the return to Bataan.

Within the Office of the Chief of Military History grateful acknowledgment goes to Dr. Stanley L. Falk, whose skill as research assistant, especially in the field of enemy materials, eased my burden and saved countless hours of digging. Thanks are also owing Dr. Louis Morton, formerly Chief of the Pacific Section and Deputy Chief of the World War II Branch, and Dr. Kent Roberts Greenfield, formerly Chief Historian, Department of the Army, both of whom gave valuable guidance and advice. I also acknowledge my debts to the General Reference Branch, Office of the Chief of Military History, and to the World War II Records Division, National Archives and Records Service, for their aid in locating and obtaining source material. Miss Mary Ann Bacon undertook the editing of the manuscript; Mrs. Marion P. Grimes was the copy editor. The task of preparing the maps that so admirably supplement the text was in the capable hands of Mr. Billy C. Mossman, who also prepared a research draft for part of Chapter XXVIII. Mrs. Norma Heacock Sheris made the excellent selection of photographs. Mr. Nicholas J. Anthony compiled the Index.

Acknowledgment of assistance by no means implies that the individuals or organizations concerned either approve or disapprove the interpretations set forth in the volume, nor should the contents of the volume be construed as representing the official views of the Department of the Army. I alone am responsible for interpretations made and conclusions drawn and for any errors of omission or commission.

Washington, D.C.  
15 March 1961

ROBERT ROSS SMITH

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