

# MUDDY GLORY

America's 'Indian Wars' in the Philippines

1899-1935

By RUSSELL ROTH



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Whether we like it or not, we must go on slaughtering the natives . . . and taking what muddy glory lies in this wholesale killing until they have learned to respect our arms. The more difficult task of getting them to respect our intentions will follow.

*New York Criterion*, February 11, 1899

The sacrifice in lives and health of American army officers and troops cannot be stated in exact terms. The total, if ascertained, would be impressive.

W. Cameron Forbes, *The Philippine Islands* (1928)

. . . our movement into the Philippines is one of the least understood phases of our history; one of those obscure episodes swept under the rug, for the best of psychological reasons, and forgotten.

Richard O'Connor, *Pacific Destiny* (1969)

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*To*  
*VIRGINIA*



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GEN. EMILIO AGUINALDO

MAJ. GEN. HENRY W. LAWTON

'THE FIGHT FOR THE FLAG'

U.S. SOLDIERS IN THE FIELD

BRIG. GEN. J. FRANKLIN BELL

MORO WARRIERS

A LUZON HEADHUNTER

CONSTABULARY ENLISTED MEN

CAPT. LEONARD FURLONG

HERMAN MILLER AT 97



## PREFACE

One of the best-kept secrets of our time has been the story of the first American soldiers to fight in Asia. This book is an attempt to tell that story. It has taken twelve years to research.

Such delving was required because, in the words of a chronicler of the era, the American government and people some eighty years ago "concluded to forget" the "rather disturbing" mission on which those soldiers had been sent.

And the forgetting has continued, creating a gap in U.S. military history, until today American policy in Asia is made in the absence of public awareness of that buried past.

Thus, the chief concern here has been to dispel both the secret and the lack of understanding it has caused with a narrative largely based on such primary documents as soldiers' letters, the writings of their leaders, the utterances of politicians, and journalists' dispatches.

It is an episodic narrative by reason of the uneven quality and availability of its sources, notwithstanding long inquiry, and the overlapping guerrilla warfare that is its milieu.

Official papers, which are frequently misleading, have been used with care, as have the relatively few and usually partisan contemporary histories of the events described.

Later histories of those events, while scarce and generally limited in the amount of ground they cover, have proved more reliable and also have been used.

In fact, anything that has given promise of lending substance to a badly faded epic adventure against great countervailing forces has been used.

And in the hope that adventure will not again be forgotten, a second concern has been to record the origins of all data making this book possible. A bibliography is appended, citations are noted, and peripheral discussions are pursued in many of the notes.

Nor could the book have been completed without the continuing help and encouragement of the following group of collectors, rare book dealers, and other specialists in relevant fields:

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Any errors of fact or interpretation are, of course, my own.

Minneapolis, Minnesota  
May 31, 1980

Russell Roth

## INDIAN-FIGHTERS IN THE PHILIPPINES

*Even the veteran Indian-fighters among them had to learn that a Moro juramentado was more dangerous than a renegade Apache and twice as hard to kill.*

—H.P. Hobbs, Jr., Kris and Krag

From 1899 through 1917, many of the officers and men of America's post-Civil War Indian-fighting Army were involved in yet another armed conflict. This time, however, rather than Kiowas, Comanches, Sioux, or Apaches, they were battling Tagalogs, Ilocanos, Visayans, Moros, and Mandayans—and the bushwhacking force they trained would battle on for nearly two decades more.<sup>1</sup>

The place was the Philippine Islands. The struggle, or series of struggles, has never been given a satisfactory name.<sup>2</sup> It all began when the United States took the islands as spoils of its 1898 victory in the Spanish-American War and then announced that, by a process of "benevolent assimilation," it intended to govern the inhabitants of those islands until they were capable of governing themselves.<sup>3</sup> Or as Chicago newspaper humorist Finley Peter Dunne's fictional Irish saloon-keeper-philosopher "Mr. Dooley" put it:

We say to thim: "Naygurs," we say, "poor dissolute uncovered wretches," says we, ". . . ye miserable, childish-minded apes, we propose f'r to larn ye th' uses of liberty. . . . We can't give ye anny votes



because we haven't more thin enough to go around now, but we'll threat ye th' way a father shud threat his childher if we have to break ivry bone in ye'er bodies.<sup>4</sup>

That being the case—and considering that the Filipinos had been in more or less open revolt against their Spanish masters since 1896—it was not too surprising when war broke out between the Americans and the Filipinos on the evening of February 4, 1899.<sup>5</sup>

It quickly became an unpopular war, but as Theodore Roosevelt, campaigning for the Vice Presidency in 1900, would say: “The reasoning which justifies our having made war against Sitting Bull also justifies our [having made war against the Filipinos].”<sup>6</sup> That was a favorite theme of Sen. Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, who said the war was

elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He has made us the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the earth. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world.<sup>7</sup>

Actually, the Army led.<sup>8</sup> And leading the Army in the Philippines was a sixty-one-year-old, stout, fussy, gray muttonchop-whiskered major general, Elwell S. Otis, who had been dubbed American military governor of the islands. “A very reserved man,” he was also “an indefatigable worker, who took upon himself the decision of all sorts of minor matters, ordinarily left by a general officer to the members of his staff.” Although his background was imposing—Harvard Law School, captain to brevet brigadier-general (and a head wound) in the Civil War, service against the Sioux, first