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A Brief History of the Philippine Communist Movement

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Abstract

These chapters provide a snapshot of the history of the Philippines from 1850 to 1963 from the point of view of the Philippine communist movement. The papers trace the rise of Philippine communism as an offshoot of the economic development of the country, which began under the last half-century of Spanish colonial rule. It then narrates the changing composition of the communist movement as the Philippines embarks on a path of tremendous political revolution from Spanish, Revolutionary, American, Japanese colonial rule, then finally as a fledgling republic.

Part 1. The Anti-Colonial Struggle (1850-1900)

The Philippine communist movement has its history intertwined closely with the economic development of the country. Mirroring the economic developments in the rest of the tropical world, the Philippines would only begin experiencing massive agricultural and economic change beginning in the second half of the 19th century. The rapid industrialization in Europe and North America during this period led to an explosion of demand for tropical products such as coffee, sugar, tin, rubber and palm oil, among other tropical products; this, coupled with advances in transportation via steamships and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, created a revolution in the quantities and types of goods traded between Europe and its colonies.¹ It was during this period that the Philippines would start transitioning from a subsistence economy to an agricultural exporter, changing the entire political and social fabric of the archipelago.

Not having encountered the hoped-for nutmeg and cloves that led the Spanish to colonize the Philippines in 1565, the subsequent two and a half centuries of colonial rule over the islands was singularly motivated by the galleon trade between Manila and Acapulco in current-day Mexico. Over the centuries, Manila had grown in relative size as a trading center for goods from all over the Asian region and by the 16th century, it had fallen under Muslim rule by Rajah Soliman, a member of the royal family of Brunei.

¹ Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970.

The Spanish arrivals instantly noted the significant presence of Chinese and Thai traders calling on the Manila settlement upon their arrival, and thus decided to turn area into a transshipment point for goods across the Pacific Ocean to their other colonies in the Americas, as well as the governing capital of their new colony. This entrepôt trade consisting mainly of tea, silk and porcelain from China and silver from the Americas, as well as a smattering of textiles, wood, and other products from the Philippines, turned Manila into the first primate city in Southeast Asia,² enriching many of its Spanish residents and at the same time discouraging them from embarking into other economic ventures as they had done in the New World. This important conduit of exchange transformed both sides of the Pacific Ocean by allowing Asians to taste novel American staples such as chili, tomatoes, tobacco and peanuts that would later become integral parts of the Asian diet and by transporting Asian agricultural products such as sugarcane and bananas that would later transform the economies of the Americas.

The limited number of Spaniards in this their furthest outpost of their sprawling empire required the mobilization of the pre-Hispanic ruling class, the *datu*, into the sole mechanism by which colonial governance would be enacted and enforced.³ Datu chieftains that brought their people into the colonial sphere were rewarded with positions in the new state as *gobernadorcillos*, becoming responsible for governing their area.

Many of the *datu* were drawn to cooperate with the new arrivals because the Spaniards offered both the prospect of wealth and military protection from the constant inter-tribal conflicts. In exchange, the chieftains were required to collect tribute on behalf of the new colonial government to fund the Spanish bureaucracy and to implement the *polo* or system of periodic forced labor that provided manpower for galleon construction, military service and other public works.⁴ Due to the importance of the galleon trade, the Spanish passed a number of decrees, such as a 1642 requirement for the planting of more coconut trees that are used for rigging, to encourage the procurement of more resources for the trade.

Not all *datu* chieftains would kowtow to the conquistadores. The Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao, whose Muslim leaders refused to bow to the Catholic cross, would maintain an armed resistance that remained successful through the Spanish colonial period, and whose

² Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

³ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005.

⁴ Alvarez, Luis Alonso. "El modelo colonial en los primeros siglos. Producción agraria e intermediación comercial: Azar y necesidad en la especialización de Manila como entrepot entre Asia y America, 1565-1593." Elizalde, Ma Dolores, editor. *Las Relaciones entre España y Filipinas. Siglos XVI-XX*. Casa Asia, Madrid-Barcelona: 2002. p. 41.

territories would form the southern boundary of the colonial state. The same anti-colonial sentiment could be said of the people of the Cordillera region of Northern Luzon, famous for both the engineering of their mountain-based rice terraces and their culture which developed distinctly from the Hispanized lowlanders.

The rest of the Filipino population generally carried on with the subsistence-level cultivation of crops, primarily of rice, as had been done for generations, as their limited dealing with the Spanish colonial government consisted solely of the presence of the resident Spanish priest, who concerned themselves mainly with the Catholicization of the populace. In essence, the socio-political and economic fabric of the archipelago – consisting mainly of independent and scattered polities residing near riverbank or coastal settlements called *barangay* – remained largely unchanged by the arrival of the European colonists.

The situation changed drastically with the end of the galleon trade brought about by Mexican independence in 1821. The Spanish colonial government needed to develop agricultural exports in order to generate enough to maintain tax revenue to maintain the colonial bureaucracy that had been heavily subsidized by the galleons. Trade liberalization was begun in 1834, as the port of Manila, whose trade had been curtailed to protect the monopoly of the Spanish galleons, was opened to commerce with other European vessels, leading to increased exports to Britain, Hong Kong, the United States and China. The country's banking system, begun in earnest in 1852 with the creation of the Banco Español-Filipino (now known as the Bank of the Philippine Islands), the first bank in the Far East, would be joined a couple of decades later with the entry of the entry of British banks, such as the Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China (now, Standard Chartered Bank) and the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (now, HSBC). Beginning in the 1820s, American and British merchant houses, such as Russell & Sturgis and Peele, Hubbell & Company would help fund new ventures and propagate new markets for Philippine products.⁵

These changes were aided by the accumulation of improvements in communications and transportation infrastructure. In 1854, the monthly mail between Manila and Hong Kong was established. Thirty years later, communication was speeded up further by the opening of a cable service between the two cities, driven mainly by the regional demand for services by the typhoon prediction capabilities of the Manila Observatory. Regular direct steamship service between Spain and Manila was initiated in 1873. The British-financed Manila Railroad from Manila to

⁵ Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999, pp. 193-217.

Dagupan, Pangasinan was opened in 1892. These and a myriad of other improvements fortified explosion in the economic activity of the colony.⁶

The rise of commercial agriculture led to the substitution of export crops for locally consumed food crops, changing the social landscape of the entire archipelago. Traditional landholding and subsistence agriculture gave way to the formation of agricultural estates. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, land was held communally by the *barangay* with its allocation presided upon by the *datu*. The Spanish introduced the concept of private property, awarding the ownership of the land to the individual tiller, with the *datu* obtaining a larger share of the land, owing to their privileged position. But as the export agricultural trade took off, the native *datu* class would find their positions of privilege usurped by the growing Chinese-mestizo class – offspring of successful Chinese traders that had decided to remain in the Philippines and marry members of the local population.

The rise to pre-eminence of the Chinese-mestizo class was a by-product of the traditional distrust and dependence of the Spanish colonial government on the growing Chinese presence in the colony. Drawn at first by the galleon trade, traders from the Southern Chinese provinces of Fujian and Guangdong flocked to the Philippines in increasing numbers beginning in the 1570s. Apart from providing Chinese-made goods for the trans-Pacific commerce, the traders provided wholesaling services for the Philippine commodities included in the international trade, as well as provisioning Manila through the collection of produce from nearby provinces. From this trade, the Chinese built a retailing network to service the domestic trading requirements of the archipelago.

Fearing the dominance by the Chinese of the domestic retail trade, the Spanish government expelled the Chinese from the Philippines in 1755. The Chinese-mestizos, having taken Filipino customs including Catholic beliefs, were exempted from the forced repatriation. As such, they found themselves in the unique position of accessing a decapitated trading network that had been built by their forebears. Moreover, the development of a cash crop economy that required collection and shipment through Manila, as well as the increasing complexity of the local retail trade, provided this growing elite corps to become more involved in the national agricultural economy than their Chinese forefathers had been.⁷

By the 1830s, the Spanish desire to strengthen the Philippine economy led to a gradual trend toward the encouragement of Chinese immigration. Improvements in transportation would

⁶ Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999, pp. 337-338.

⁷ Wickberg, Edgar. *The Chinese in the Philippine Life: 1850-1898*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 2000. (First Edition, 1965), pp. 3- 23.

lead to an explosion of the Chinese population in the Philippines from 5,700 in 1847 to up to 90,000 by 1886. The return of the Chinese traders would provoke strong competition against the mestizo retailers, leading to their displacement by the turn of the century. By 1898, the Chinese retailers had attained their pre-expulsion status in Manila and occupied a very strong position in the retail trade of almost every province.⁸

Thus, the Chinese-mestizo found themselves with surplus cash but little hope of recapturing the domestic retail trade. As such, they would move their entrepreneurial interests towards land-ownership and the growing agricultural export trade. Many of them would settle in Central Luzon, the area immediately surrounding the capital, in search of a profitable agricultural enterprise.

By 1870, the Philippines moved from a rice-exporting colony to that of a rice-importer, making food security dependent on the price of the export crops. As rice-farming gave way to export production, farmers became more dependent on cash-based transactions, and would oftentimes borrow from wealthier landowners or money-lenders during times of poor harvests or to pay for weddings or funerals. These loans would be collateralized via the *pacto de retroventa*, wherein peasants would 'sell' the land to the loaner with the option of purchasing the land back at the same price within a specific period of time. The borrower continued to have usufruct rights on the land, but was now seriously indebted. Pacto loans were difficult to repay and were usually renewed until the debts had accumulated that were far larger than the plot of land was worth.

Eventually, the dispossessed farmer would become tenants on lands that were originally theirs. In this way, the new colonial elite, many of whom were Chinese mestizos, became the owners of the best land for export crops with its own labor force linked by kinship or networks of personal relationships.

Apart from the Chinese-mestizo owned landholdings, many of these agricultural estates ended up in the hands of the Spanish religious orders, who had accumulated their vast landholdings over the centuries through purchase, donation or outright landgrabbing and later rented them out to wealthy individuals for farming.⁹ Unlike the Spanish administrators who spent at most three years in any one province, if at all, the priests and friars spent their lifetimes in villages and often used their ecclesiastical offices to achieve political influence. By the 1880s,

⁸ Wickberg, Edgar. *The Chinese in the Philippine Life: 1850-1898*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 2000. (First Edition, 1965), pp. 3- 23, 61.

⁹ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005.

these friar brotherhoods had accumulated vast properties, amounting to some 200,000 hectares, and at times operated these landholdings under an oppressive tenancy system.¹⁰

In this manner, the Chinese-mestizo and the Spanish orders would displace the *datu* class as the main locus of power in the colony, and the competing interests between these two groups would create increasing friction, as the economic resources flowing into land increased throughout the decades.

All sorts of tropical products vied for pre-eminence as the main export crop of the country. Attempts at encouraging the widespread export of different tropical products such as wood, cotton, indigo and cinnamon met with limited success.¹¹ However, the colony would find its comparative advantage by the 1880s in the form of tobacco, abaca, coconut and sugar, crops that became the main agricultural exports of the country.

The cultivation of tobacco, whose notoriously addictive plant seedlings were brought from the Americas, became extensively grown in the colony because of a 1781 Spanish decree which required peasants in certain areas of Luzon to plant tobacco and to purchase cigars only from the state-led Tobacco Monopoly. The Monopoly was enacted as a mechanism to generate state revenues but its abusive nature led to its abolition in 1882 despite providing up to one-half of the revenues of the colonial administration. However, the privatization of the state tobacco companies allowed the industry to thrive and maintain its previous production levels.¹² As such, tobacco thus provided much employment in both the planting of the leaf and the rolling of the cigars, made mainly by women in Manila.

Another agricultural product of unique value to the colony was abaca hemp, a banana-like plant whose fiber was of great demand for rope-making due to its strength and resistance to salt water. The increasing world trade and complementary shipping industry led to the explosive demand for abaca-made ropes. The islands possessed an absolute monopoly of the product and attempts to raise abaca outside the country met with almost complete failure.

The third product, coconut, provided a myriad of uses such as oil, margarine, soap and food. The mass production of underwear and soap from coconut oil contributed to the improvement of hygiene and contributed to the rapid industrialization of Europe as mortality rates decreased. After the drought in the American West of the 1880s, ending in the death of millions

¹⁰ Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970, p. 290.

¹¹ Trechuelo, Ma. Lourdes Dias. "*Filipinas en el siglo XVIII: La Real Compañía de Filipinas y otras iniciativas de desarrollo.*" Elizalde, Ma Dolores, editor. *Las Relaciones entre España y Filipinas. Siglos XVI-XX*. Casa Asia, Madrid-Barcelona: 2002. p. 88-101.

¹² Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970. pp. 285-287.

of cows, coconut oil was used in Europe as a substitute to beef fat and as margarine to replace butter, whose prices had also increased because many people left the countryside to work in factories during the Industrial Revolution.

However, it would be sugar that would become the colony's top export at the turn of the century. Unlike abaca, tobacco or coconut production, which required little capital and could be grown in both large or small farms, the milling machinery necessary for production of export grade sugar dictated that most production be organized on a plantation basis. The rise in plantation agriculture corresponded with a rise in tenancy, with close to 20 percent of the farmers not owning the land that they tilled by the end of the 19th century.¹³ The situation of increasing land tenancy existed despite the fact that much of the archipelago was still unpopulated.

This early era of globalization also brought about a flood of cheap imports that decimated some of the existing cottage industries that had flourished during the first few centuries of Spanish rule. Most evident was the entry of cheaper machine-woven fabrics from Glasgow and Manchester led to the decline of the textile industry that centered around the Ilocos and Iloilo regions of the country.¹⁴ The lack of alternative income led many households in these areas to migrate to the less populated provinces of central Luzon and Negros island in search of new lands for cultivation.

The social changes in these areas were staggering. The Ilocos provinces, during the 1850s were characterized as relatively highly developed, with agricultural, commercial and industrial features owing to the production of rice and cotton. To the Manila markets, they sent great quantities of rice, wheat, sugar, raw and manufactured cotton, among other items.¹⁵ A visiting French cavalry officer visited the town of Paoay in Ilocos Norte and remarked that how many cities in Europe would think themselves happy to have even half of what Paoay had?¹⁶ The remnants of this significant economic base remains still visible to the present with the continued existence of large mansions in most Ilocano cities, as well as the massive stone churches that are strung out along the length of the Ilocos coastline, with two of which have merited listing among UNESCO's World Heritage Sites.

¹³ Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970.

¹⁴ Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

¹⁵ Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

¹⁶Renouard de Sainte-Croix, Felix. *Voyage Commercial et Politique aux Indes Orientales, aux Iles Philippines, a la Chine, avec de notions sur le Cochinchine et le Tonquin, pendant les anees 1803, 1804, 1805, 1806 et 1807*. Vols 2-3. Imprimerie de Crapchet, Paris, 1810.

Within a span of a few decades, the picture had changed. The end of the textile trade eliminated the income generated by the men from cotton farming and the women from textile weaving. The smallholders' parcels became insufficient to maintain the population and Ilocano migration, already under way, accelerated.¹⁷ The two Ilocos provinces saw their population dwindle from close to 350,000 inhabitants in 1850 to slightly more than 320,000 by 1870. Travelers to Ilocos now noted its populous and backward state.

The same story would repeat itself in Iloilo. Its textiles and fabrics were exported throughout the world. A French visitor to the province would note in 1840 that the colors of the cloths are so bright that they are admired worldwide. That year, 248,000 francs worth of cloth was exported via Manila.¹⁸ At its peak in the 1850s, Iloilo's urban population totaled more than 71,000, making the city of the same proportions as Sydney (54,000), Chicago (84,000) and Buenos Aires (91,000) during that era. During that time, there were around 60,000 looms operating throughout the province, employing about one-half of the potential female labor force.¹⁹ Not coincidentally, the third of four churches listed on UNESCO's are located in Iloilo.

Within twenty years, the fabric export trade had vanished. European and American cloths which were introduced into the market beginning in 1855 when Iloilo port was opened to foreign trade, and produced to look like the native varieties provided a severe competition for the native textiles. Sold in the market at much lower prices, the Ilonggo textile industry was reduced to almost nothing by 1879. The city's population would dwindle and would not reach its 1859 population until after the First World War.

Deprived of its economic base, the city's entrepreneurs and farmers migrated across the strait to Negros. Within a space of a half century, the sparsely populated island saw its population grow 20-fold, as migrants seeking land to benefit from the expanding export trade moved there. After many grueling months clearing tropical forests and cultivating new crops, many would find their untitled lands later usurped by better-connected locals seeking to increase their sugar plantations.

Thus, the vagrancies of globalization would also bring penury and insecurity to the Filipino economy. Well-being and wealth would become dictated by the global price of their export commodities. A coffee blight in Brazil in the 1870s led to a spike in global coffee prices in

¹⁷ Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

¹⁸ Mallat, J. *Les Philippines: Histoire, Geographie, Moeurs, Agriculture, Industrie et Commerce des Colonies Espagnoles dan l'Oceanie*. Arthur Bertrand, Editeur, Paris, 1846.

¹⁹ McCoy, Alfred, "A Queen Dies Slowly: The Rise and Decline of Iloilo City," in McCoy, Alfred and de Jesus, Ed. C., editors, *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1982.

bringing untold wealth to the coffee planters in Batangas province. Such affluence led to wanton displays of ostentation, such as the wearing of diamond-studded shoes and the burning of bank notes for pleasure.²⁰ But by 1885, the blight would spread to Luzon, devastating the Batangas coffee industry and those dependent on it from which it would never recover.²¹

But such stories of rags-to-riches and back were rare. The more prevalent stories involved less of a roller coaster ride, more akin to the relatively comfortable rice and textile producing households of Iloilo that would become daily wage laborers working for sugar hacienda owners in Negros within one or two generations as a stark example of the negative impact of these changing social forces. This led to the situation wherein food security for farmers became subject to changing economic winds; for example, during the 1880s when English purchases of sugar declined, there was a subsequent increase in mortality brought about by instances of famine.

Nonetheless, the rise of export agriculture would bring fantastic wealth to many Filipinos. The rise of the native middle class brought about the aspiration of a lifestyle akin to the European one, leading to the increased importation of furniture, mirrors, pianos, carriages from Europe and the United States, with one of the signs of the epoch being the annual visit of Italian opera companies to Manila from 1867 onwards, even before the Suez Canal was opened.²²

The developing complexity of the growing economy led to the creation of numerous new paths of employment for urban Filipinos. By the 1850s workers in the arsenals and shipyards of Cavite formed *gremios* or worker organizations for the mutual aid and benefits of workers. These proto-unions or guilds soon spread among the tobacco factories, printing houses and other various trades and occupations that arose in step with the growing wealth coming from produce from the countryside. Among the earliest guilds were the Gremio de Obrero de Sampaloc, Gremio de Escultores del Barrio Sta. Cruz, and Gremio de Carpinteros.²³

Some of the first vestiges of nationalism and calls for social justice would come from these urban-based working class unions. It was during the late 1800s that the *gremios* would begin conducting mass action on account of abuses and maltreatment of workers at the hands of their Spanish superiors, as well as to request for increases in pay. In fact, among the earliest events that inspired Filipino nationalism was a mutiny in 1872 of workers in the Cavite shipyards

²⁰ Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

²¹ Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970.

²² Legarda, Benito. *After the Galleons: Foreign Trade, Economic Change and Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

²³ Department of Labor and Employment, *The Philippine Labor Movement*. <http://www.blr.dole.gov.ph/laborcentennial.htm>

and the execution of the mutineers and their sympathizers.²⁴ These gremios would, in the coming century, organize themselves further as trade unions and become the urban bases for the spread of communist ideals.

The increased aspirations of this new elite would lead to the sending of their children abroad to Spain to be educated, which eventually led to a generation of expatriate Filipinos questioning why a third-rate European power, as Spain had become towards the end of the 19th century, ruled over a rapidly developing nation. This *ilustrado* (enlightened) class, as they would be known, brought forth the birth of Filipino nationalism in the 1890s, decades before other Asian nationalists would imagine their own independent nations.

The Philippine national hero, Jose Rizal, personified the *ilustrado* nationalism of the period. The offspring of a wealthy family leasing friar-owned lands from Laguna, a young Rizal would be sent to Spain to study medicine in 1882 where he would band together with young Filipino students to call for reform of the existing Spanish-Philippine colonial relationship and write two novels questioning the power wrought by the Spanish friars in the colony. His writings, as well as the writings of other *ilustrado* propagandists in Spain, were smuggled back into the Philippines and inspired local leaders based in Manila to imagine a Philippines freed from Spanish rule.

With the aim to foster the overthrow of the Spanish, Andres Bonifacio, a young urban worker from a poor family in Manila, created the *Katipunan*, a more radical secret society that prepared for armed revolution. Spanish knowledge of its existence prompted Bonifacio to launch a preemptive rebellion in August of 1896. Though the Spanish military forced easily routed the revolutionaries in Manila, outside the capital, one community after another declared itself free of Spanish rule. Moreover, the execution of Rizal at the hands of the Spaniards in December of that year would spark greater revolutionary zeal among his compatriots.

The defeat of Bonifacio and his proletariat following at the hands of the well organized Spanish army would lead to the transformation of the leadership of the revolution. The *Katipunan* would crystallize under Emilio Aguinaldo, a prominent Chinese-mestizo politico from Cavite, whose early military successes in Cavite conditioned his election as *Katipunan* Supremo in place of Bonifacio. Bonifacio's refusal to acknowledge Aguinaldo's leadership led to his arrest and execution, a death that signaled the transfer of power within the hierarchy of the revolutionary army from lower-class leaders to the provincial elite and *ilustrado*.²⁵

²⁴ Department of Labor and Employment, *The Philippine Labor Movement*.
<http://www.blr.dole.gov.ph/laborcentennial.htm>

²⁵ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, pp 110-115.

The Philippine Revolution against Spain would be different from the localized uprising that sporadically occurred throughout the archipelago during the Spanish colonial era, as it contained national undertones both in its aim for the political independence for the archipelago and the extent of its scope of revolutionary followers throughout the territory. Moreover, the military victories by the Spaniards could not undo what the *Katipunan* had done – transform political conditions despite military defeat. Hence, despite the defeat of Aguinaldo’s forces in 1897 and their subsequent exile in Hong Kong, the Philippine Revolution proceeded as more communities rallied to the cause of independence.

Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines in May 1898 with the help of the United States to reclaim the leadership of the revolution. From his home in Kawit, Cavite, on 12 June 1898 would declare the independence of the Philippines and begin to assemble a parliamentary government under his presidency. The success of this Philippine Revolution in achieving an independent state would be short-lived; although, its impact would be felt even after the surrender of its most ardent revolutionaries.

The Philippine Revolution would coincide with the Spanish-American war of 1898, drawing the most rapidly developing country in the world into the Filipino-Spanish conflict. War stories circulating in the US reporting on the brutality of the Spanish army in Cuba prompted widespread support for the US army to aid of the Cuban freedom fighters. The presence of the Spanish colony in the Philippines drew the US Pacific Fleet into Manila Bay and provided the Spaniards the opportunity of surrendering its Philippine colony to the United States rather than to Aguinaldo’s republic.

Under the pretext of “manifest destiny,” the United States army would begin the bloody conquest of the fledgling nation in 1899, repeating many of the brutal activities of the Spanish army in Cuba that sparked the outrage that brought the US into war against Spain. The sheer size and superiority of the invaders, coupled with the benefits noted by certain wealthy Filipino plantation owners in becoming a territory of what had become their largest export market, spelled doom for the fledgling independent state.

Despite this, Aguinaldo’s ragtag army fought courageously against the new colonizers. More than 600,000 Filipino civilians, more than one-in-ten inhabitants, died during the Filipino-American War that followed the Philippine Revolution, the bloodiest war the country had ever seen. Though the dream of immediate independence sought by the revolutionaries ended with the capture of Aguinaldo in 1901, the valiance of the Philippine revolutionary army ensured that American rule over the islands would be predicated on its eventual disentanglement from United States rule.

It was during this period of great social upheaval that the first stirrings of an organized peasant movement would begin. Unwilling to submit to further abuses from the government and their landlords, strong-willed peasants would lead millenarian movements predicting the end of the world and its rebirth as a new just society. These movements fused both Spanish Catholic and traditional mystical beliefs under the pretext of the preparation for the creation of a new society away from the exploitation they experienced from mainstream society. Some of these movements would begin as orthodox religious activities, organized by the Spanish friars that would mutate into revolutionary movements.

An example of these religious peasant movements is the *Guardia de Honor de Maria* movement in Pangasinan, a province that experienced widespread Ilocano migration during the 19th century. The *Guardia de Honor* was founded by the Dominican Order in 1872, inauspiciously as a prayer group aimed at upholding Catholic orthodox practices among the laity.²⁶ Ten years later, fearing a growing cult in their hands, the Dominicans decided to sever all ties with their Ilocano chapter. By then, the movement had evolved into a quasi-religious movement, led by their charismatic leader, Julian Baltazar, prophesizing judgment day in 1886 and failing that, called for the creation of an autonomous state in the town of Cabaruan in Pangasinan province. The Christian religious underpinnings of the movement were evident in its nomenclature, with Baltazar being elevated as the personification of God Almighty, and his successor Antonio Valdez, deemed as Jesus Christ.

With the chaos of the Philippine Revolution, the movement organized itself as a guerilla army by amassing weapons from Spanish garrisons and battling against not only the Spanish and later, the American forces, but also the Revolutionary army of Aguinaldo, whom they saw as the military allies of their abusive landlords. Referring to themselves as *Los Agraviados*, the Guardia de Honor turned the revolution into a class war, attacking Filipino-held haciendas in search of food supplies for their growing number of followers. New peasant recruits were also tasked to raid their landlord's food supplies and move permanently to Cabaruan, where they could live without needing to till the land anymore, since in heaven, nobody worked. This virtual utopia could exist, as long as new followers kept pouring in to feed the existing population.

At its peak in 1901, Cabaruan would have a population of 25,000 and would find itself unable to attract enough new followers to feed its residents. At this point, the Guardia de Honor began attacking even peasant landholdings, undermining their own base of support. The peasantry that had previously sought Valdez's support against their enemies, now cooperated with the

²⁶ Paul Dimayuga Dimayuga, Paul. "Messianic Leaders of the Revolution." <http://www.bibingka.com/phg/religious/default.htm>

American colonial army to pacify the region. By June of that year, the leaders of the Guardia would be executed in Urdaneta, Pangasinan and reverse migration would leave Cabaruan virtually non-existent.

A similar movement appeared in Negros Occidental, when a 50-year old plantation worker named Dionisio Sigobela would flee to the mountains and attract a band of other aggrieved workers to join his movement. Sigobela was himself born in Iloilo and like many of his province-mates, he would migrate to Negros in search of a better life, lose his farm to a large landowner and find himself working at a Spanish owned sugarcane plantation in La Carlota.²⁷

Sigobela's movement was a fusion of nationalist fervor and religious symbolism, with Sigobela naming himself Pope (Papa) and comporting himself as a *babaylan*, a native shaman from pre-Hispanic society.²⁸ In line with the on-going Revolution of 1896, Papa Isio's movement would morph into a nationalistic movement that targeted Spanish authorities and ally themselves with the Revolutionary armies in Negros in the quest for independence.

However, when in 1898 the Negros planters decided to ally themselves with the invading Americans, their largest sugar market, Papa Isio denounced the planters as traitors and began attacking the haciendas themselves. The conflict between Papa Isio's army and the landowning class took on characters of a class war, with the former plantation laborers fighting for the destruction of the sugar industry and the redistribution of the haciendas into small rice farms.

In 1899, the insurgents instigated mass uprisings in the vast haciendas along the slopes of Mt. Kanlaon and razed several towns in the course of a four month period. All in all, 56 plantations were burned out and 12 planters were murdered in that year alone. The American commander noted that the insurrection was not against the United States but against the property owners.

In response, the plantation owners decided to pool their resources and create a private army to protect their haciendas. As the attacks succeeded in reducing the island's sugar output, the US Army also committed three battalions in hopes of quelling Isio's guerillas. With the US garrisons and the hacenderos private armies guarding the plantations, Isio would see his forces slowly decimated by the superior firepower. Nonetheless, despite all of these resources and even a sizeable bounty on his head, authorities were not able to capture the elusive peasant leader.

²⁷ McCoy, Alfred, "A Queen Dies Slowly: The Rise and Decline of Iloilo City," in McCoy, Alfred and de Jesus, Ed. C., editors, *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1982.

²⁸ Larkin, John. *Sugar and the Origins of Modern Philippine Society*. New Day Publishers: Quezon City, 2001.

Only after a failed offensive in 1907, now a sickly old man, Papa Isio surrendered himself to the US Army.

Similar other millenarian peasant movements, such as the *Santa Iglesia* in Pampanga, *Papa Rios* of Tayabas (now Quezon Province), *Dios Dios* in Leyte and the *Pulajanes* of Samar, would appear during this period with the same intention of bringing social justice and religious salvation to an oppressed peasant class. Depressed markets, political change and oppression at the hands of the landed class threw peasants' lives in disarray, while millenarianism offered them solace and a rallying point for organized protest.²⁹ The supernatural and religious undertones of each revolution shows that these movements were not merely based on particular grievances such as the redistribution of land or their own material well-being,³⁰ but also as rallying cries against the massive economic dislocation that led to the elimination of traditional and well-understood social roles. Many of these movements occurred in areas of migration and new settlement, where the traditional social ties were least evident.

The defeat of these peasant movements were generally caused by the capture of their charismatic leaders and not by the resolution of peasant grievances, and as such, it would be in these same geographic locales that future leaders, with more 'modern' ideologies that evoked class rather than religious struggle would find followers among the impoverished classes. The arrival of the new US regime was expected to improve the political situation of the country, given the propaganda of democracy and principled governance preached by the invaders. Unfortunately, despite the rapid economic growth that came with US colonization, the age-old problems of landlessness and worker exploitation remained unresolved, allowing future leaders preaching social justice to revive and enlarge these dormant movements.

Part 2. The Rise of the Left under American Rule

The gallant stand of the Filipino nationalists in the face of a superior army forced the United States to use indiscriminate force to pacify the archipelago. The atrocities of the bloody occupation, which included indiscriminate killing, scorched earth tactics and concentration camps for civilians galvanized many American intellectuals such as writer, Mark Twain and steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie to vocally question the entire colonial exercise.³¹ Among the worst of the atrocities occurred in Balangiga, Samar, where in response to an ambush of American forces at the hands of disguised Filipino guerillas, the US forces were ordered to transform Balangiga

²⁹ Larkin, John. *Sugar and the Origins of Modern Philippine Society*. New Day Publishers: Quezon City, 2001.

³⁰ Sturtevant, David. *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines: 1840-1940*. Cornell University Press: Ithaca, 1976.

³¹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 2-6.

into a “howling wilderness,” taking no prisoners and killing anybody capable of carrying arms, including ten year-old boys.³²

To appease both the defeated Filipino revolutionaries and the anti-imperialist lobby back home, American colonial rule became idiosyncratic, predicated on the notion that the invasion of an independent state was really a selfless exercise to educate this backward society for preparation for eventual independence – a policy not applied to other newly acquired US territories such as Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Thus, the American administrators quickly moved to establish all of the trappings of a modern democratic government and showcase the colonial escapade as an instance of ‘benevolent assimilation’. The US embarked on a scheme wherein the administration of the colony would be put back into the hands of local inhabitants as soon as each area was pacified. The policy was also utilized to attract the elite supporters of the Philippine revolution through their appointment as governors, mayors and even national legislators – a policy akin to the conscription of the *datu* class by the Spanish authorities three centuries prior. However, in stark contrast with the previous regime, the chosen elite supporters could access positions much higher than the municipal level posts that they were allowed to attain during Spanish times.

The need to demonstrate that the impetus for colonization was indeed ‘education for self-rule’ forced the US authorities to organize the election of provincial governors in 1906 and in 1907, parliamentary elections for the installation of the Philippine Assembly. The *Partido Nacionalista*, which advocated immediate independence from the United States overwhelmingly defeated the *Partido Federalista* that had desired a closer relationship with the US and showed the continued support for ideals of the Philippine Revolution.³³

More significantly, the victory by these candidates, mainly comprised of wealthy landowners, provided the local and provincial elite with external sources of power emanating from the US colonial government. Previously, local landowners garnered prestige and power through the support of peasants and thus showered them with patronage and protection. As such, the colonial experience would weaken the traditional social relationship between landlord and tenant.³⁴

³² Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Rosskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 16-17.

³³ Golay, Frank Hindman. *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1997, pp. 122-124.

³⁴ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979.

Among the provincial elite that would rise to national prominence were Sergio Osmeña and Manuel Quezon, lawyers from the provinces of Cebu and Tayabas (now Quezon) respectively. Notably, their rise to prominence began with their appointments as governors in their respective provinces, as compensation for their show of support to the new US-led government after the Philippine-American War. Their rising star status resonated equally with the voters, to whom they would loudly also advocate independence and nationalism, allowed them to become the two most powerful politicians in the colonial government until independence. They continued enhancing their power throughout the US colonial period, as they would become adept at winning support from the Philippine electorate by continually advocating an anti-American stance, yet at the same time eliciting favors from the US government via through mutually beneficial arrangements.

Nonetheless, the arrival of the American regime to the Philippines marked a stark shift from the non-responsive governance experienced during the Spanish colonial epoch. Transport infrastructure in the form of ports, railways and highways were developed and improved. Health services and sanitation were quickly established, especially in response to the cholera and other epidemics brought about by the years of war. The public education system was expanded significantly, shifting the lingua franca of politics and commerce in the country from Spanish to English within a couple of generations.³⁵

However, the temporary nature of US rule over the islands promoted the passage of policies that inadvertently hampered the economic development of the colony and limited the economic participation of US corporations in the new territory. For example, the US Congress decreed that land holdings of US corporations in the Philippines were to be limited to 1,024 hectares, in order to prevent Filipinos from being exploited by a plantation economy. Major American companies, such as rubber producers Firestone and Goodyear, could only content themselves with 1000 hectare rubber plantations in Mindanao, despite their desire to undercut the rubber producers of British Malaya that were serving the booming US tire market.

Such practices led to a relatively low pace of foreign investment in the Philippines, and a slower rate of economic development, as compared to other tropical colonies such as Dutch Indonesia, British Malaya or French Indochina.³⁶ To illustrate, the total foreign investment in the Philippines from 1900-1920 was approximately 11 million US dollars by only 16 US corporations, in stark contrast to the 250 million US dollars invested in Medan, Sumatra in

³⁵ Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970.

³⁶ Lewis, W. Arthur, *Tropical Development 1880-1913: Studies in Economic Progress*. Northwestern University Press: Evanston, IL, 1970.

Indonesia alone from 1890-1929, where large plantations of more than 8,000 acres could be opened.

As such, there were very few Americans involved in export agriculture in the Philippines, whereas plantations on immense estate existed in all other European colonies, all financed with European capital. By the end of US colonial rule, barely half of all foreign investment in the country was American, despite the colony's trade dependence with the mainland. US investments in other countries, such as Cuba, Chile and Argentina were all larger than what it had invested in the Philippines.³⁷

It must be noted, though, that like most Philippine laws, such limitations were generally subject to loopholes allowing well-connected businessmen to obtain large concessions. The Del Monte Corporation, through its subsidiary the Philippine Packing Corporation purchased 1,024 hectares for a pineapple plantation in Bukidnon, Mindanao for its own planting, with the government allotting another 13,000 hectares for farmer-planters. However, for expenses, the farmers had to mortgage their lands to the corporation and in case of foreclosure the government obtained ownership of the lands for redistribution to other farmer planters.³⁸ A similar arrangement was created for Dole for 5,500 hectares of land for bananas in Cotabato. As such, these corporations obtained usufruct 'ownership' of massive plantations, without garnering legal titles to the lands, as disallowed by law.

The regime change also allowed for the entry of socialist ideas through the return of Filipinos who had been exiled to Spain due to the outbreak of war. One of these returnees, was a journalist named Isabelo de los Reyes, who was deported to Barcelona after having been wrongly suspected by the Spanish authorities of leading the members of the elite in support of the Philippine Revolution. In Barcelona, he would become acquainted with Marxist ideas, bringing their works to Manila in October 1901.³⁹ His first action of organizing labor began among the printers when he organized the *Union de Litografos y Impresores de Filipinas* in 1902. Later that year, he organized the *Union Obrera Democratica* (UOD), the first labor federation in the country, organizing the disparate *gremios* that had developed during the late Spanish period. Aided by labor leader Herminigildo Cruz, the UOD began with a base of printers and

³⁷ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 80-81.

³⁸ Corpuz, O. D. *An Economic History of the Philippines*. University of the Philippines Press: Quezon City, 1997. p. 252.

³⁹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992.

lithographers, but would later include cigar makers, tailors, mechanics and workers from various trades.⁴⁰

On July 4, 1902, symbolically choosing the US Independence Day, the UOD called a mass meeting of its members. 50,000 of their members turned out for a demonstration in Manila, demanding Philippine independence and alarming the US authorities who stationed troops in the city. In a later mass movement in August, the UOD would clamor for other goals, such as wage increases for its members. De los Reyes was arrested shortly and imprisoned under charges of sedition, rebellion and inciting workers to increase the price of labor, a violation in the Spanish Labor Code.

The arrest forced de los Reyes to resign his post and his successor, Dominador Gomez, a medical doctor who had studied in Madrid where he wrote anti-Spanish articles with other *ilustrados* such as Jose Rizal, took over the organization and reorganized it into the *Union Obrera Democratica de Filipinas* (UODF). This larger federation continued the call for the downfall of American imperialism intertwined with labor demands such as an eight-hour workday, and the recognition of May 1 as a holiday. In 1903, the first May 1 celebration was held in the Philippines under the auspices of the UODF with 100,000 workers and supporters turning out in protest. In this year, the UODF set up its own newspaper, *La Redencion del Obrero* which was shut down the following year but revived as *Los Obreros*. Gomez would be arrested for sedition and sentenced to one year of hard labor. One of the main leaders of the union, Crisanto Evangelista would fall into conflict with the CODF and set up a separate union, the *Union de Impresores de Filipinas* in 1906.

In essence, the organization of the trade unions in the country was clearly born of the Philippine independence struggle, with its rhetoric that fused together trade union and political demands.⁴¹ Moreover, unlike the millenarian peasant movements, the arrest of union leadership did not cause the downfall of the entire labor movement, as new leaders were always available to take up the cudgels of the struggle and reestablish the organizations under new guises and with more numerous membership. In 1913, the UODF was reorganized as *Congreso Obrero de Filipinas* (COF) by Hermenigildo Cruz, Gomez's successor at the UODF, and Crisanto Evangelista in an effort to reunite the labor front after the dissolution of UODF. It must be noted that the labor unions at this point were relatively moderate in their claims, desiring mainly protective labor standards, an 8-hour workday, protection of women and child labor and social

⁴⁰ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers' Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992.

⁴¹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992.

insurance. The unions would be successful in achieving some of these aims; in 1908, May 1 became an official labor holiday and the Bureau of Labor was created. On 1 May 1912, the first law related to working conditions is promulgated.

Because of their roots in the independence struggle, the COF leaders found themselves collaborating more and more closely with the *Nacionalistas* and their campaign for immediate independence. These ties had developed through Cruz himself who had been deeply involved with the *Nacionalistas*. Shortly after its inception, the COF, upon Quezon's invitation, sent delegates to attend the *Nacionalista* Party meetings in Manila.

Moreover, as the colonial government began sending missions to the United States to lobby for independence on an annual basis, the COF became more closely involved with the independence campaign. During the first independence mission in 1919, Crisanto Evangelista himself would be sent by the COF to represent the interests of labor. The COF even supported a resolution calling for an abstention from striking for all workers during the independence missions, lest the strikes be misconstrued as a sign of instability and undermine the promise of independence upon the existence of a 'stable government' in the islands.

By the 1920s, the COF had become close collaborators with the government, with some of their leadership being appointed into the colonial administration. Leaders such as Cruz, then appointed as Assistant Secretary at the Bureau of Labor, had become convinced that unions should depend on government for assistance and protection.⁴²

Despite their growing power and influence in the colonial government, the ability of the COF to promote the cause of the labor sector they aimed to represent was not as strong. Though the COF officers attempted to help settle labor dispute, many of the conflicts between labor and management were still resolved by the Bureau of Labor officials.

By the end of the 1910s, the socialist rhetoric that permeated the labor unions began to resonate among the rural farming communities. In 1919, the *Union de Aparceros de Filipinas* (UAF) was organized by Jacinto Manahan in Bulacan, the first peasant union in the country. Much like its urban version, the peasant union would reorganize a number of times, first becoming the *Confederacion Nacional de Aparceros y Obreros Agricolas de Filipinas* (CNAOAF) in 1922 before evolving into the *Kalipunang Pambansa ng mga Magbubukid ng Pilipinas* (KPMP or National Association of Philippine Peasants) in 1924. The shift from Spanish to the Philippine language was significant as it reflected a shift in nationalism among the

⁴² Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers' Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992. pp. 37-40.

people.⁴³ Many of these peasant unions sprung up in Central Luzon, given its proximity to Manila and the labor unions, and because the increasing population in that area had brought about an increase in tenancy. Much like their urban counterparts, the rural unions desired very moderate demands such as increased daily wages, access to cheap loans and larger crop sharing, with few peasants questioning the landownership situation.⁴⁴

The growing visibility of the organized labor and farmer sector ensured that the national government could not turn a blind eye to the increasing economic and social problems gripping the Philippines. However, the solutions provided by the US colonial government in solving the growing tenancy problem was encumbered by the government's attempts to transpose American models of economic development to its far flung colony. The land ownership problem was expected to be partially resolved by a cadastral survey of the entire archipelago to find out who owned what land. At the same time, the government also implemented a Torrens titling system, instituted in 1902, that issued deeds upon application after survey and court proof of ownership. Instead, the implementation of legal titling that placed landownership based on a government recognized title above the peasant's traditional right to ownership, facilitated the further instances of land-grabbing, as well-connected wealthy individuals were able to obtain title to lands held by illiterate peasants.⁴⁵

A second solution was the enactment of homesteading programs in less populated areas of the archipelago, particularly the island of Mindanao to generate settler-led frontier development akin to what had occurred in the continental United States. Applicants could claim 40-acre lots from the public domain after submitting an application with a survey to prove there was no claim. Response to the homesteading opportunity was very small, caused both by the cumbersome bureaucratic process for obtaining a homestead, and more significantly, the cultural differences inherent in the conservative Filipino village structure that provided social penalties for leaving the tight-knit family-clan.

A more likely explanation to the low settler uptake was the distinct historical underpinning of the island-destination of the settlements. Mindanao, particularly its westernmost areas, was never fully united to the rest of the islands by conquest by the previous Spanish colonizers. At the turn of the 20th century, unlike the Catholicized majority in Luzon and the Visayas, the population of the island remained mostly Muslim or animist. The Americans, at the

⁴³ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 59.

⁴⁴ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979.

⁴⁵ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979.

onset of the Philippine-American War, understood the strength of the more powerful polities among the Muslim sultanates, and as such entered into a peace treaty with the Sultan of Sulu, Jamalul Kiram II in 1899 to ensure their non-participation in the war of conquest. Upon the end of the Philippine American War, the peace treaty would be abrogated and the Moro-American war of conquest would follow until the defeat of the Moros in 1913.

The third solution enacted by the new colonial government in overcoming the growing tenancy problem was the purchase of the bulk of the friar estates and their conversion to public lands for sale. The Spanish religious orders and the lands they owned had become one of the main lightning rods of discontent that drew Filipinos to the Philippine revolution, especially among the elite plantation managers who were renting from them.

In 1903, the United States announced the purchase of 166,000 hectares of friar estates for redistribution. However, only around half of the purchased lands were transferred to landless peasants, with the remaining half, mainly virgin forest, were sold or leased to American and Filipino business interests. Moreover, this first attempt at land reform was implemented with no support mechanisms to ensure its success – no credit, cooperatives or technology provided to the farmers. Unfortunately, many of these beneficiaries fell bank into tenancy, now to wealthy Filipino hacenderos who later purchased or expropriated the lands when tenants as returned to debt.⁴⁶

Economic growth was expected to be boosted by a freer exchange of goods between the Philippines and its new colonial master. In 1909, the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Act established bilateral free trade between the United States and the Philippines. Within two decades it was crystal clear how the free trade agreement between the two regions spectacularly improved the economic development of the Philippines. Philippine agricultural exports increased five-fold from about 80 million pesos in real terms during the 1900s to close to 450 million pesos in 1934.⁴⁷ In addition, the contributions made by the export-led sectors were enhanced by the impressive gains in rice cultivation. There was a massive expansion both in acreage planted to cash crops and staple crops. In turn, these activities stimulated other non-agricultural sectors such as electricity generation, transportation and domestic commerce.

However, these improvements came with a growing dependence on the US market. During the first decade of the 20th century, Philippine exports were almost evenly distributed

⁴⁶ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, pp. 122-123.

⁴⁷ Wong Kwok-Chu. *The Chinese in the Philippine Economy 1898-1941*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999, pp. 50-68.

among its major trading partners: Britain, the US, China and Spain. However, after 1910, the US share of exports went from approximately 32 percent to a high of 77 percent in 1932.⁴⁸

Most significantly, the preferential access to a large sugar-consuming nation caused sugar to become the country's leading export, displacing the other primary export crops, like abaca hemp, tobacco and coconut. The strong domestic sugar beet lobby in the US assured that tariff protection be accorded to the commodity, allowing the New York price of sugar to be up to 150% higher than the world price in the 1930s. Such a lucrative arrangement made the Philippine economy overly dependent on sugar production, and by 1934, sugar plantations constituted 40% of the crop area, 65% of the total export value, 30% of the national income and 40% of government revenue.⁴⁹

The other major export crops of the country, particularly abaca hemp and coconut, received no benefits from the preferential tariff due to the fact that neither of these products were grown in the continental US, and was sold in the US at the world market price. The primacy of sugar as the country's prime export aggravated the tenancy problem of the country given the requirement for plantation-based for the processing of cane to sugar, as opposed to the other export crops of the country. Its other export crops, such as tobacco, abaca and coconut could be planted on large-scale or small-scale plantations.

The economic boom caused by the enactment of the free trade arrangement in 1909, proceeded quite strongly and was boosted by a commodities boom caused by the outbreak of World War I. Coconut oil exports, in particular, benefited from the war, because of its use in the manufacture of glycerin for smokeless powder and nitroglycerin for explosives such as dynamite. This economic boom was followed by a sharp contraction after 1920, as the commodities prices fell after World War I came to a close. To illustrate this boom-bust cycle, the number of oil mills ballooned to 41 in 1918, from only one three years earlier; however by 1926, only seven of these mills were still in operation.⁵⁰

As such, the decade of the 1920s became saw an increase in discontent among the peasants and a revival of the dormant millenarian movements that exploded during the turn of the century. Though the economic downturn was short-lived, lasting but a couple of years before the colony returned to a path of development, the deterioration of landlord-tenant relations in the countryside prompted the continued unrest during the 1920s.

⁴⁸ Wong Kwok-Chu. *The Chinese in the Philippine Economy 1898-1941*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999.

⁴⁹ Find citation

⁵⁰ Wong Kwok-Chu. *The Chinese in the Philippine Economy 1898-1941*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999, pp. 56-57.

Traditionally, ties between local elites and peasants were akin to patron-client relationships, wherein tenant farmers expected a more personal and traditional relationship with their landlords that included protection, financial assistance during hard times and a guarantee of rations for subsistence in exchange for the agricultural services that they provided. As their power grew and their abilities to manipulate the national government became more apparent, the now increasingly Manila-based and nationally empowered landlords becoming less interested in the personal well-being of their tenants and more interested in promoting their rise within the national bureaucracy and the lucrative benefits derived from such power.

The main impetus for the increase in government influence by the landowning class was the 1916 passage by the United States Congress of the Jones Law, the first organic act promising to grant the Philippines independence once a stable government was established. This law was understood by the US colonial policymakers as a go-ahead to speed up the implementation of the Filipinization policy of transferring more and more branches of the government bureaucracy to the hands of locals.

With Filipinization, the dominant land-owning political class was able to consolidate power further by uniting under the *Nacionalista* banner and utilizing its growing dominance of the colonial bureaucracy to extract more economic rents from the government. The *Nacionalista* dominated legislature undertook numerous policies favoring their own class, such as the passage of bills exempting uncultivated lands from being taxed or the set up of the University of the Philippines, whose state-subsidized education accepted mainly the children of the wealthy.

The most blatant act of colonial rent-seeking began in 1916, when the Philippine legislature set up the Philippine National Bank (PNB) to finance export producers who wanted to take advantage of the growing US market. The bank grew explosively during the economic boom caused by the rise in commodity prices caused by the outbreak of World War I in Europe and by 1918, it held almost two-thirds of total assets of the Philippine banking system.

However, this phenomenal growth occurred because of corrupt banking practices. Loans were dispensed without credit consideration, principally to well-connected owners of sugar centrals and coconut oil plants, far exceeding the lending limits. When the basic source of bank funds – government deposits – provide insufficient, the bank not only began printing money but also made a systematic raid on the currency reserve fund in New York, snatching US\$41,500,000 to lend in the Philippines. When the prices of agricultural products tanked after World War I, driving many borrowers to bankruptcy, the PNB also became hopelessly insolvent. However, the size of the bank ensured that the devastation of the bank went beyond the PNB and affected the entire economy. By 1921, the national currency was in shambles and the government was

practically broke.⁵¹ The PNB fiasco was a major set back for the independence movement that the Filipino electorate at large had been clamoring for since the turn of the century as it was utilized as an illustration the Philippine government was not ready for self-rule. Such a situation did not phase the ruling classes because although they publicly favored immediate, complete and absolute independence to appease the electorate, the privately desired the benefits of self-rule without the liabilities of ultimate authority.

Given their newfound source of power and money, landlords become less and less willing to maintain a personal relationship with their tenants. The landlords spent most of their time in Manila or in one of the provincial capitals, leaving the running of the hacienda to plantation managers, who took a strictly business attitude to the peasants. Peasants were now expected to pay for loans on time, charged for different services accorded to them, even lost the ability to obtain to extraordinary assistance during times of difficulty. However, they still required that the tenants provide the same amount of rents and obligations as they had provided in the past.

In effect, absentee landlords treated their tenants more as contractually-bound employees, a social contract that the tenants now saw as imbalanced and exploitative. Yet, the tenants had no alternative means to air their grievances as the new national status acquired by the landlords allowed them to call upon government agencies or even the Philippine Constabulary to enforce any legal claims they maintained against the peasants. The landlords even hired civilian guards to protect their property and enforce the crop-sharing agreements.⁵²

Not coincidentally, the Pangasinan plains where many of the Ilocano migrants had moved became the breeding grounds in the formation of another millenarian sect, the *Kapisanan* movement. The local peasants were attracted by the utopian and nationalist demagogue Pedro Kabola, who promised these victims of land-grabbers, moneylenders and landlords salvation on earth. Their planned insurrection was abruptly stopped on March 1925, when Constabulary agents rounded up their leaders.

Similar occurrences would transpire in other areas of new settlement. In the early 1920s, the *Colorums*, an egalitarian and nationalistic religious sect began to grow in northeastern Mindanao. The growing sect was harassed by local authorities who failed to understand the rites and purposes of the sect. The Colorum turned into open rebellion by 1924 and would be suppressed with a severe loss of lives.

⁵¹ Hutchcroft, Paul. *Booty Capitalism: The Politics of Banking in the Philippines*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1998. pp. 66-70.

⁵² Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 71-74.

Despite their resurgence in the 1920s, none of these millenarian movements would have the following or the success that their revolutionary forebears would achieve. For many aggrieved peasants and laborers, the leftist ideology of socialism and communism provided an understandable and attractive alternative to charismatic religious movements.

Thus in contrast, the organized labor and peasant movements gained further strength and experience during the 1920s, especially as they utilized different battlegrounds for promoting social changes to alleviate their plight. The strike had been an old union weapon utilized by unhappy workers since the late Spanish period, and this era witnessed instances of work stoppages in cigarette factories, at the harbor in Iloilo, in the sugar mills of Negros, Pampanga and Laguna, among others. However, the 1920s saw the formation of “general strikes” wherein workers from several factories would simultaneously call for strikes in many factories in Manila, as well as in factory branches in Rizal and Bulacan.⁵³

Moreover, some of these strikes would take a deadly turn and inadvertently weaken the position of the labor unions. The most notorious strike of the period involved the Manila Electric and Railway Company (Meralco), an American company enfranchised by the city of Manila to provide electricity and street cares to the city. In May 1919, company employees desired to talk with company owners about changing their working conditions and asked the *Congreso de Obreros* to provide them with assistance. When the Meralco general management ignored the petition, since they considered their employees relatively well-paid, the employees went on strike. The COF officials provided full support of the striking workers, as they were irked by Meralco’s tyrannical and hostile position. Undeterred, Meralco their willingness to go head-to-head with the strikers by employing strike breakers under guard by the Philippine Constabulary.

A bomb explosion in June broke the impasse. The homemade bomb left in one of Meralco’s cars exploded and killed an innocent bystander. The bomb shocked the city residents as it was the first time a death was linked to a labor dispute. The bomb signaled defeat for the strikers, especially after a former Meralco employee admitted guilt and implicated the COF strike committee chairperson in the affair. COF leader Crisanto Evangelista himself would be arrested for making seditious remarks prior to the explosion.⁵⁴ It had become slowly apparent that the inability of the labor groups to obtain adequate concessions from the government had led to disillusionment by many members of its moderate stance.

⁵³ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers’ Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992.

⁵⁴ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers’ Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992. pp. 40-45.

The labor unions also continued to encourage labor demonstrations, but this time, these demonstrations were enhanced by additional contacts to the burgeoning global labor movements, as contacts with other labor movements with other countries intensified. The classic works of Marx and Engel found their way into the Philippines, during this period and the workers began desiring to convert their numbers into political power. Ironically, the impetus for such a party formation would be initiated by Evangelista himself, whom like his predecessor Cruz, was a card-carrying member of the *Partido Nacionalista*. In 1919, Evangelista was tasked to represent labor by the Nacionalistas in the first independence mission sent to the United States, and there, he was able to attend the convention of the militant Industrial Workers of the World.⁵⁵

Exposure to the growing global communist movement, especially during the post-Russian Revolution euphoria, encouraged the radical turn of the labor unions. The first attempt at turning the union into a stronger political force happened in 1922, with the creation of the Partido ng Manggagawang Progresibo by Antonino Ora, though the existence of this political party was short-lived. However, the clear break between the *Nacionalistas* and the more radical members of the labor sector happened in 1925, when Ora and Evangelista officially launched their *Partido Obrero*, a political party whose manifesto attacked the *Nacionalistas* as being tools of American imperialism and labor oppression. It is possible that Tan Malaka, Indonesian nationalist and representative of Communist International (Comintern) for Southeast Asia, had inspired them to form the political party advocating the communist ideology during his exile in Manila during this period.

Over the course of the decade, the *Partido Obrero* and its associated *Congreso de Obreros* would maintain more and more radical, left-leaning demands, patterning its ideology more and more after the communist experience in the Soviet Union. With fellow labor leader Jacinto Manahan, Evangelista attended a conference in Russia in 1928 and return claiming that Russia was the only country in the world that promotes true equality and true national democracy.

In 1929, the *COF* itself would be split between the moderate and radical factions, with the leftwing *Katipunan ng mga Anakpawis sa Pilipinas* (KAP, Proletariat Labor Congress) led by Evangelista, Manahan and Juan Feleo eventually splitting itself from the larger congress, now led by Isabelo Tejada and Ruperto Cristobal. In August of 1930, the three KAP leaders would organize the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas or the PKP, taking the extreme position for the establishment of the Soviet in the Philippines.

⁵⁵ Pomeroy

The symbolism utilized by the leadership in forming the PKP attempted to demonstrate an ideological unity between the Philippine and Russian Revolutions. The creation of the central committee of the PKP was done in the Templo de Trabajo in Manila on the 26th of August 1930, the anniversary of the Cry of Balintawak that heralded the start of the Philippine Revolution. It's official public launch transpired on 7 November 1917 in Plaza Moriones in Manila to coincide with the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Nonetheless, the radical position taken by the PKP was not be taken lightly by the government authorities and an immediate crackdown of the PKP was implemented.

The creation of the PKP would happen concurrently with the appearance of the Socialist Party of the Philippines (SP), another alternative political party seeking to redress the grievances of the poor. Founded in 1932 by Pedro Abad Santos, a wealthy landowner and congressman from Pampanga, the SP drew its support from peasant unions in Central Luzon, such as the KPMP, than the urban unions that supported the PKP.⁵⁶ Unlike its radical counterpart in the PKP, the SP remained moderate in its stance and steered clear of the Soviet communist ideology. It was very critical of the government, but it wanted to work through legitimate channels, discouraging violence and organizing peaceful strikes and demonstration to achieve their moderate ends. Even its aims were very moderate: mainly demanding 50-50 sharing of the crop with the landlord, rather than the prevailing 70-30; and an end to usury. However, as a burgeoning political force, it started choosing its own candidates for elections. Surprisingly, especially for the elite, the party started to win.

The rise of these twin political parties, with their mass base in the urban and rural impoverished sectors, and their eventual union in the coming decade would turn the peasant and labor movements into a strong political force. Their electoral victories over the course of the 1930s would force the government to take a more proactive stance in understanding and assuaging the grievances of the masses.

Part 3. The Growth of the Communist Party as a Political Force (1930-1941)

On 29 October 1929, the stock market in New York would crash, marking the start of a worldwide economic downturn that would spread from the United States to Europe, Latin American and numerous other parts of the world. This Great Depression, unprecedented in its scale and duration, would bring about massive economic dislocation and social upheaval, leading to the rise of dictatorship, fascism and at its end the deadliest conflict in human history. The sharp contraction in economic activity in the industrial countries of North America and Western

⁵⁶ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979. pp. 43-53.

Europe transmitted the Depression to Southeast Asia, as demand for many of the region's primary export products vanished. For example, the contraction of automobile production in North America greatly diminished the demand for rubber in Dutch-held Sumatra in Indonesia, British Malaya and even the meager rubber plantations in Mindanao.⁵⁷ Until today, the Great Depression is remembered as an era of intense suffering, massive unemployment and political trauma in many parts of the world.

In contrast, the 1930s were a time of unbridled optimism for the Philippines. Though certain Philippine agricultural sectors would be badly hit by the depression, many parts of the country would remain unscathed and even flourish from the economic downturn experienced by other parts of the world. In fact, the era is still fondly remembered by old folks in the Philippines as 'pistaym' or peacetime, a time of relative prosperity that predated the horrors of World War II.

Among the worst hit by the Great Depression were the abaca plantations in the Bicol region and the coconut growing regions in the area of Luzon just south of Manila, particularly Laguna. Export volumes for abaca fell by more than 50% from 1928 to 1932, while those for coconut produces fell by more than 40%. To illustrate the importance of these crops to the economy, it must be noted that coconut exports had become an important export item by the 1930s, with 450,000 hectares of land planting to it and with coconut oil constituting 20% of exports, from only 1% in 1890. Many of the farmers in these areas were forced to return to subsistence farming which decimated their income levels. The economic devastation forced many less able farmers to sell their lands to landlords, leading to an increase in tenancy.⁵⁸

The impact of the export slump spread throughout the other sectors of the domestic economy. For example, the disappearance of the cash economy led to the evaporation of the retail trade, with hundreds of stores in the affected regions 'still padlocked' in 1934. Rice prices were halved from 1929 to 1931, remaining at that low level up to 1934. Landlords faced by the cash crunch in Central Luzon tried to limit their costs by reducing the interest-free loans and other benefits they had provided to their tenants, worsening the already precarious state of landlord-tenant relations. The scarcity of money drove up the interest on informal credit leading to an

⁵⁷ Boomgaard, Peter and Brown, Ian. *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of Southeast Asia in the 1930s Depression*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 2000, pp. 1-4.

⁵⁸ Doeppers, Daniel. "The Philippines: A Geography of Pain." In Boomgaard, Peter and Brown, Ian, editors. *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of Southeast Asia in the 1930s Depression*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 2000, pp. 54-78.

increase of complaints about usury and indebtedness.⁵⁹ Many workers were fired or given wage cuts, while peasants were evicted in the larger estates.

As had been said before, not all regions suffered from the Great Depression. Many of the non-traditional pioneering ventures of the US colonial period saw their incomes grow during the period. The abaca growers of Davao, whose production was pioneered by almost 20,000 Japanese settlers that had begun to settle in the area beginning in 1903, served the Japanese rope makers and suffered little from the Depression. Its main markets of Japan and Russia remained vibrant during the period and the industry's continued success allowed Davao to attain more than 50% share of the total Philippine abaca production by 1938.⁶⁰

Bukidnon's economy grew from the commencement of corporate pineapple growing for canning and export. The gold mining areas of Baguio and the Mountain Provinces of Luzon saw a gold rush during the period, as gold prices skyrocketed world wide. Tobacco, the least extensive of the major crop, enjoyed a relative boom during the Depression, as the recession forced many American cigar smokers to turn to cheaper brands, bringing a welcome upturn to the Manila cigar industry.

But the most controversial crop, and by the 1930s, the colony's most important export, sugar was hardly affected by the Depression. In fact, the sugar producers would even experience a boom in the years 1933 and 1934, even while their counterparts in Southeast Asia, such as Java in Indonesia suffered terribly. Preferential access to the protected United States market kept sugar prices high. Unfortunately, because of the nature of its production, much of the income benefits from sugar accrued primarily to the planter class, and less to the smallholders and tenants. This subsequently led to a building boom in Manila and other provincial towns – set off by the low cost of materials and labor.

This stark contrast between American suffering and relative Filipino economic success would inadvertently become the catalyst for Philippine independence. The Great Depression saw a rise in protectionism worldwide, as industrialists and planters blamed foreign imports as the cause of the falling prices and rising unemployment. Ironically, the Smoot-Hawley Tariff of June 1930 that was passed in the US raised tariffs by up to 50% on a wide range of goods actually worsened the economic trauma by encouraging other countries to follow suit. US-based farm groups, particularly dairy and sugar producers, decried the unfair competition coming from

⁵⁹ Wolters, W. G. "The Philippines: Uneven Impact and Regional Responses." In Boomgaard, Peter and Brown, Ian, editors. *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of Southeast Asia in the 1930s Depression*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 2000, pp. 84-105.

⁶⁰ Shinzo, Hayase. "The Japanese Residents of Davao-Kuo." In Setsuho, Ikehata and Jose, Ricardo Trota. *The Philippines under Japan: Occupation and Reaction*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City. 1999. pp. 247-253.

Philippine exporters that were exempted from this tariffs being a territory of the United States and provided detailed proof indicating how Philippine imports rose substantially during the past decade while American agricultural prices fell year after year.

Other social groups dispossessed by the Depression began voicing an anti-Filipino sentiment in unison with the farmers. Labor groups, such as the American Federation of Labor complained about the threat of competition posed by the entry of cheap labor from the Philippines, decrying the willingness of Filipino migrants to live miserly on 'fish and rice' and 'occupy one or two rooms only'. White supremacists protested the intermarriages between Filipino migrants and Caucasian women. These imagined social problems could be instantly resolved by the granting of Philippine independence, allowing the US to enact limits on the entry of Filipino goods and migrants into the mainland.

The Philippine independence missions that the country had been sending to the United States since 1919 finally cobbled together a sizeable enough coalition of these disparate groups to compel the US Congress to enact legislation specifying a date and mechanism for the official transfer of sovereignty. The 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria provided a greater sense of urgency for getting rid of the Philippine colony, stoking fears that the United States could be dragged into war with an expansionist, militaristic Asian country.

In 1932, as the Great Depression deepened in the US, the independence mission led by Sergio Osmeña, now a prominent Senator, and Manuel Roxas, Speaker of the Lower House of the reorganized Philippine legislature, finally attained success in their continuous lobbying through the passage of the Hare Hawes Cutting Act or the Philippine Independence Act. However, Senate President Manuel Quezon, sensing the increase in popularity to be garnered by his rival Osmeña could lead to his likely fall from power as the country attained national independence, urged the Philippine Senate to reject the bill on grounds of its unfair provisions limiting trade and immigration, while imposing permanent military bases in the country.

Quezon himself led the subsequent mission in hopes of obtaining improved legislation from the United States. In 1934, Quezon came back with the Tydings-McDuffie Act, a carbon copy of the original legislation but with the clause imposing military bases replaced with one requiring naval stations instead. With Quezon's support, the new but hardly improved Philippine Independence Act was finally approved by the Philippine legislature.⁶¹ Now the United States

⁶¹ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 56-59.

had enacted a law providing a precise date for the long-delayed promised independence: 4 July 1946.

In 1935, the Philippines began the legislated ten-year transition period prior to the attainment of full independence. This Commonwealth Period came with increasing limits on free trade and immigration which satisfied the American farm and labor lobbies. A new constitution was written and ratified; and the country elected Quezon and Osmeña as the President and Vice President of the Philippine Commonwealth. Retired general Douglas MacArthur was hired as Field Marshall to oversee the creation of the Philippine Army, especially with a militarized Japan looming over the horizon.

Despite the positive effects brought about by the political changes, the negative effects of the economic downturn still resonated among the downtrodden. The depression occurred at a time when the expansion in Philippines' most important agricultural area, the Central Luzon plain was coming to an end, as the land frontier started to close. As new lands became increasingly scarce, rents increased, tenant and laborer profits fell.⁶²

As before, economic downturn brought a revival to peasant unrest which led to additional instances of peasant millenarian revolution. Though the movements drew from the same constituency of oppressed peasants and mobilized them in like manner of violent attack in face of improbable odds of success as the millenarian movements of previous eras, the 1930s millenarian revolts had less of the religious, mystical overtones and espoused a more nationalistic, independence-centered ideology. Most of these movements aspired for immediate independence, though the independence they sought was more than just the creation of a separate state unbridled by US rule.

Patricio Dionisio, a radical journalist and lawyer, started a movement that claimed to have up to 100,000 members spread across most of Central Luzon. The Tanggulan (Tagalog for Offensive) movement bridged the poor and middle class members in both the urban and rural areas. Its declared aim was to achieve independence through armed uprising. However, in December 1930, before it was able to take action, its leaders were arrested.

Unresolved tensions among the earlier described *Kapisanan* revolt of the 1920s would make the area ripe a successor movement. As such, the *Kapisanan* followers would later join the movement of the Philippine National Association, founded by Pedro Calosa. The PNA would seize the town of Tayug in 10 January 1931 and massacre the constabulary detachment there,

⁶² Boomgaard, Peter and Brown, Ian. *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of Southeast Asia in the 1930s Depression*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 2000, pp. 1-4.

occupying the town and destroying the land records. They had been hoping to ignite a spontaneous revolution among the peasantry. Retribution was prompt and bloody.⁶³

In 1934, a trade union leader, Teodoro Asedillo, evading arrest for participating in a major Manila tobacco workers' strike, took to the Sierra Madre mountains of Laguna and Tayabas (now Quezon province) where he recruited an armed group. His guerilla struggle, calling for independence and an end to unjust taxation, lasted for almost a year. Though he won extensive support from the villages of the region, he would later be killed by the Philippine Constabulary, the domestic police force which was under the command of the US Army since its inception in 1901.⁶⁴

Some of these instances of unrest had also taken a racist turn. The fall in copra prices in 1931 led to the mobbing of the Chinese in San Pablo, Laguna, the heart of the nation's most concentrated coconut production zone. The Chinese dominance of the country's domestic trade made them easy scapegoats for a suffering class. A large group armed with clubs and stones marched from store to store, destroying as they went. Reportedly one Chinese person was killed and several injured. While the local police did nothing, the governor and several constabulary units quickly restored order.⁶⁵ These attacks against the Chinese were not attacks mainly based on their ethnicity but on their representation of the 'oppressive class' in accordance with 'class struggle theory'.

Later that decade, the most deadly of the millenarian revolts, the *Sakdal* uprising would transpire. The waffling of the *Nacionalista* Party on the independence issue stimulated the growth of other radical groups which agitated for immediate independence. The most influential of these groups was the *Sakdal* (Tagalog: Accuse) movement founded by Benigno Ramos, a disaffected government clerk that was a former protégé of Quezon. After breaking with Quezon and the *Nacionalistas*, Ramos founded a Tagalog newspaper with the same name, and launched a campaign predicated on the independence issue and attacking the *Nacionalistas*. His pro-independence streak mixed with his staunch support of radical pro-peasant demands, such as the redistribution of land, the end of landlord power and even the end of taxation. His fervor and propaganda struck a responsive chord in the provinces surrounding Manila and his growing popularity encouraged him to form the *Sakdal* Party in 1933, whose main program was a call for

⁶³ Golay, Frank Hindman. *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1997.

⁶⁴ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 89-91.

⁶⁵ Doeppers, Daniel. "The Philippines: A Geography of Pain." In Boomgaard, Peter and Brown, Ian, editors. *Weathering the Storm: The Economies of Southeast Asia in the 1930s Depression*. Institute of Southeast Asian Studies: Singapore, 2000, pp. 54-78.

complete and absolute independence by the end of 1935, opposing the establishment of the Commonwealth government. By 1934, the *Sakdalistas* had an estimated 200,000 members; the Party contested the legislative elections of that year and garnered three seats in the lower house, one governorship and a number of municipal offices. However, the *Sakdal* triumph was short-lived with many of his elected party members defecting to the *Nacionalista* contingent.

Faced with a bleak future, Ramos and the remnants of the *Sakdal* party – mainly its rural constituency – became increasingly scathing in their criticism of the government and the *Nacionalistas*. The government reacted by passing laws obstructing *Sakdal* meetings. The repression of the *Sakdals*, coupled with bad harvests and limited government support, culminated in an outright revolt in May 1935, as 65,000 partially-armed party members attempted to seize municipal buildings in 14 major towns in Laguna, Cavite and Bulacan at sundown. Hard-pressed Constabulary units from the provinces and Manila fought three engagements with the *Sakdalistas*, perennially receiving disturbing reports of an impending attack on Manila, supported by Japanese aircraft. The insurrection was suppressed by the Constabulary in the next day with an unprecedented loss of dissident lives, estimated to be more than 100 persons.⁶⁶ Ramos fled to exile in Tokyo and would later return with the Japanese occupying army. It must be noted that the areas where the *Sakdal* uprising occurred was generally in the areas negatively affected by the Depression, rice growing Bulacan and coconut growing Cavite and Laguna.

It would be in this decade when the fates of the millenarian and communist movements, the rural and the urban poor would begin to intertwine more closely, as they found themselves beleaguered by a common enemy: the landlord dominated government supported by the Americans. Both Dionisio and Asedillo were members of the PKP but the party did not support their actions.

The start of the Depression also witnessed the beginning of the *Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas*. The PKP closely followed the Comintern line in its activities and stand on issues. Its formal proclamation on 7 November 1930 – coinciding with the 13th anniversary of the Russian Revolution – showed its symbolic affinity to the Soviet movement. Such revolutionary propaganda and radical demands espoused by the newly formed Partido Komunista led to the arrest of their main leaders, Evangelista and Manahan in 1931 under charges of sedition. Despite being allowed out on bail, the communists would find themselves unable to obtain permits for rallies and being harassed by the police. Unable to obtain permits for their rallies and even their party congresses, the PKP and the KAP, Evangelista's radical labor union from which the PKP

⁶⁶ Golay, Frank Hindman. *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1997, pp. 340-341.

obtained its membership, decided to proceed with their party congress in defiance of the law. All 400 delegates of the 31 May 1931 meeting were arrested though only the main leaders were held more than 48 hours.

Later in September of that year, both the PKP and KAP were deemed illegal by a Manila court, a judgment that would be affirmed by the Supreme Court in the following year. Evangelista, Manahan, among many other PKP members were convicted and sent to jail in 1933. The public support by the PKP with the Tayug uprising was one of the reasons proposed by the government to justify its outlawing, though there was very little evidence pointing to actual cooperation between the movements. Ironically, foreign communists criticized the PKP for not having been in touch with the Tayug peasant rebels, and as such, failed to provide them with a definite and clearly defined revolutionary program and leadership.⁶⁷

Nonetheless, these repressive policies succeeded in crippling the KAP and PKP, before these fledgling organizations could take off. KAP-sponsored activities suffered from poor attendance, while more than 500 PKP members went so deeply underground that it was virtually impossible to contact them. Manahan himself would switch to the government side, while Ora would be killed in a car accident in January 1931. Despite the disappearance of the PKP, the peasant unrest in the provinces, and the strikes in Metro Manila continued.

In stark contrast with their urban based counterparts, the rural sector in Central Luzon experienced more unification during this decade. To help unite the Pampango peasants, Pedro Abad Santos set up the *Aguman ding Madlang Talapagobra* (Kapampangan for 'Union of the Toiling Masses') in 1934. The AMT existed in parallel with Abad Santos' Socialist Party and virtually no distinctions were made between the party and its amorphous trade union. By 1938, this movement had also garnered approximately 70,000 members. On the other hand, membership in the KPMP had grown to 60,000 members. As a show of even stronger force, the two largest peasant movements in Central Luzon, AMT and KPMP, agreed to act in unison and form a coordinating committee in 1939.

The government did adopt a handful of laws during the mid-1930s that were supposed to resolve the differences between the peasant and large landowners. These laws were enacted as part of President Quezon's "Social Justice" program, but they never intended sweeping reforms. In fact, the laws generally included protection and escape-clauses for the landed elite, given that they had been the ones writing and enacting the laws.

⁶⁷ Saulo, Alfredo B. *Communism in the Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1990. (First Edition, 1969), pp. 19-25.

For example, the Rice Share Tenancy Act of 1933 was passed to protect tenant interests through a more equal sharing of inputs and produce. This was enacted to appease the complaints of the rural peasantry regarding usurious practices by landowners, and protection against arbitrary ejection of tenants. However, the law was hobbled by its unworkable conditions of enforcement, requiring the landowners themselves to petition for its local introduction. The law was amended in 1937 to provide 50-50 crop sharing, a guaranteed 15 percent share of the produce to the tenant, irrespective of the amount of debt to the landlord and for landlord-tenant contracts to be written in the local dialect. Nonetheless, even after this amendment, the law never provided any significant effect, since its enforcement was always placed at the hands of the landlord.⁶⁸ In fact, in 1939 and 1940, thousands of cultivators were evicted by the landlords because they insisted on the enforcement of the Tenancy Act.

Other laws that were passed under the guise of social justice were the Minimum Wage Act and the 8-Hour Day Labor Act, at least for some industries. He created a National Commission of Labor and a National Commission of Peasants in which left-wing groups were included and given board posts, although conservative organizations were carefully ensured majority representation.⁶⁹

As part of the Social Justice program, Quezon pardoned Evangelista in 1936, as a showcase of rapprochement between the government and the labor organizations. In addition, Quezon legalized the PKP in October 1937, although it was unclear whether he had the power to do so since it was a judicial act by the Supreme Court that led to its suspension. Part of the reason for the change in the government treatment of the communist movement was the growing fear of Quezon of the rise of fascism, particularly its Japanese version, that he felt required national unity.⁷⁰ Although a more likely reason for the act of forgiveness was Quezon's need to increase widespread support from labor as he desired an amendment to the recently passed 1935 Constitution that forbade him to run for re-election in 1941. The government's ability to co-opt much of the membership of the PKP divided the remaining members of the urban labor movement. The KAP itself would see its membership dwindle as the Commonwealth Period

⁶⁸ Elson, R. E. *The End of the Peasantry in Southeast Asia: A Social and Economic History of Peasant Livelihood, 1800-1990s*. MacMillan Press: London, 1997, p. 151.

⁶⁹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 98-99.

⁷⁰ Saulo, Alfredo B. *Communism in the Philippines*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1990. (First Edition, 1969), pp. 25-27.

progressed, and Evangelista himself admitted that by 1940 the labor movement in Manila was weak and divided.⁷¹

Nonetheless, with their renewed political rights, and greater assurances from the Quezon government not to interfere with their ability to hold meetings and demonstrations, the remaining PKP decided to step up with its political movements. The idea of a merger with the Socialists was proposed by Abad Santos, given the weakened state of the PKP. With the support of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), the PKP and Abad Santos' SP were able to unite and form the Communist Party of the Philippines, with Evangelista as chairman, Abad Santos as vice-chairman and Guillermo Cappadocia as Secretary General.

Though united in name, the PKP and SP never really coalesced properly as a singular united entity. The differences between the SP and PKP involved not only personal animosity among the members and other quotidian organizational problems, but proceeded into the realm of ideology. The rural-based socialists were generally lukewarm to the urban communists whom they thought were 'godless' agents of Moscow; while the communist saw the socialist as anarchistic, too lazy to read Marxist literature and prone to violence.⁷² The lawyer Abad Santos never really saw himself as a secondary figure to the unschooled Evangelista, who by this time was frail and sick. Abad Santos often made press statements contrary to the official Communist Party line. Nonetheless, the Communist Party formed one of the few minority parties in existence that had the gumption to combat the *Nacionalista* Party that thoroughly dominated Philippine politics.

In any case, as the decade wore on, the rising strength and militancy of the labor and peasant movements became more and more apparent, despite the disunity among the communist leadership. In 1938, there were 188 recognized trade unions, with more than 45,000 members, a number which did not take into account the unrecognized unions. By 1941, the figure had grown to 438 unions with more than 100,000 members. Trade union led strikes numbered 57 in 1937 had grown to 203 strikes involving almost 28,000 workers by 1940.

The same story could be said about the increasingly militant peasantry. Peasant struggles against tenancy conditions rose from 663 events involving less than 2,000 tenants in 1937, to 1,374 events involving more than 4,600 tenants in 1940. However, much of these instances of peasant activism was carefully planned and manipulated by leaders. Even in the late 1930s, when the KPMP and AMT had merged, the central leadership of these unions could not orchestrate the

⁷¹ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers' Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992. pp. 40-45.

⁷² Larkin.

peasant actions. Leaders merely helped to structure the growing unrest in the barrios, but they did not foment or instigate it.

What did occur despite the lack of singular leadership among the working and peasant classes was the increasing show of unity among striking workers. In 1937, the protests of a few tenants on the Sabani estate in Nueva Ecija developed into a major strike by nearly all of the 2,000 tenants there in 1938. On 1 May 1935, three thousand peasants paraded in San Fernando, the capital of Pampanga, four years later, the parade had grown to 30,000 farmers. Peasants in Calumpit, Bulacan and Balanga, Bataan went on strike in January 1939 to support thousands of striking peasants in Pampanga. These concerted peasant strikes kept repeating itself throughout the decade.⁷³

This increased militancy heralded a swift reaction from the political class. Beginning in the last years of the 1930s, landlord and business groups clamored for laws restricting worker and peasant organizations. Central Luzon became the hotbed for peasant discontent and the Philippine Constabulary were called on to combat many strikes in the fields. In mid-1941, the Constabulary had taken over the municipal forces in a great many towns of Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Tarlac, Pangasinan, Bataan, Zambales, Laguna, Cavite, Batangas and Tarlac Provinces. In Pampanga province, where the peasant struggles reached their peak, a rightwing strike-breaking organization, the *Cawal ning Kapayapaan* (Kapampangan for Knights of Peace) was set up to terrorize peasants.⁷⁴

But the rising awareness and seeming unity of the impoverished classes left them undeterred in their attempts at achieving political empowerment in the face of strong opposition. Perhaps the most significant evidence of the peasantry's growing unity and political awareness was in the ballot boxes. Starting in the 1937 elections, peasant organizations decided to support candidates and themselves run for local and governmental positions in Central Luzon. For this purpose, the Popular Front electoral ticket, comprised of candidates selected by the different unions and parties such as the SP, AMT, and KPMP was created in 1936. During their first attempt at electoral victory, two municipalities attained peasant-backed mayors and councils.

The meager victory would translate into more substantial results in the following electoral season. In the 1940 election in Central Luzon, councilors and mayors, all running under the Popular Front ticket, were elected in a dozen towns of the Central Luzon provinces of Pampanga, Tarlac and Nueva Ecija. In Pampanga alone, their candidates won nine mayoralties

⁷³ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, pp. 45-47.

⁷⁴ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 99-100.

and a majority of council seats in eight of those municipalities. Their candidate for governor, Pedro Abad Santos himself, lost by only five thousand votes.⁷⁵

These meager but consolidating political gains achieved by the growing peasant and working class movements would be abruptly put to an end on 8 December 1941. A few hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Japanese planes began bombarding targets all over the Philippines. The Japanese would bring the Second World War to the shores of the Philippines and within weeks, the Filipino nation-in-waiting would be faced with a new occupier.

Part 4. The Japanese Interlude (1941-1945)

The mounting military aggression of the Japanese in Manchuria, and then Indo-China in the 1930s provided a clear signal to the Filipino leaders of an impending invasion of the rest of Southeast Asia. In response, the first steps taken by the Philippine Commonwealth government upon its establishment in preparation for self government was the creation of a self-defense force. Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon appointed retired general Douglas MacArthur as Field Marshall and gave him the responsibility of crafting a feasible defense plan for the country. His grandiose war plan envisaged a force of 11,000 men, backed by a reserve force consisting of 40,000 men to be trained each year. MacArthur's defense plan included meeting the enemy at the beaches of every invasion point, which the US government thought unfeasible. In 1941, the Philippine defenses consisted mainly of air and ground forces scattered around Luzon, 10,000 scouts fielded around the capital and a single US battlecruiser anchored off Panay Island; most of the archipelago was left underprotected.⁷⁶

Nonetheless when the Japanese did attack the Philippines on 8 December 1941, the attack still came as a surprise. Japanese fighter squadrons attacked Northern Luzon within a few hours of the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor across the Pacific in Hawaii and the coordinated air raids destroyed the aircraft stationed at Clark Air Base, the headquarters of the colony's air force since 1903, virtually eliminating the archipelago's air defenses within hours. That same day, Japanese naval combat units landed and began seizing airfields and ports to support the larger invasion.

None of these landings encountered much fierce opposition, despite MacArthur's plan to defend the beaches. Despite the integration of the tens of thousands of US troops with the Commonwealth government's standing army into the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) these soldiers consisted only of 32,000 men, approximately 12,000 of which were

⁷⁵ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979.

⁷⁶ Cartier, Raymond. *La Seconde Guerre Mondiale*. 1965.

Philippine scouts.⁷⁷ This defense force was no match for the Japanese onslaught as they marched into the rest of the country. Within weeks, the subsequent Japanese invasion forces had attained all their initial objectives and were in a position to invade the Central Luzon plain and following that, the capital.

By Christmas Eve, MacArthur realized the futility of his original defense plan and signaled to his field commanders to withdraw into the Bataan Peninsula, a more defensible position at the mouth of Manila Bay. Manila was declared an open city to spare its citizens from harm and the Commonwealth government of Quezon and Osmeña were moved to the island of Corregidor. The defense of Bataan and Corregidor was intended to keep the overwhelming might of the Japanese troops temporarily at bay until support from the rest of the US armed forces could be sent to the Philippines.

But the support troops never came, despite MacArthur's constant pleas for the sending of land, sea and air resources. Sensing abandonment by the United States that had prioritized the war on the European front rather than in the Pacific, Quezon sent word to US President Franklin Roosevelt asking whether the bloodshed wholly necessary and questioning the right of the United States to demand loyalty from its citizens beyond its willingness to render actual protection. In mid-February, Quezon asserted that further armed resistance in the Philippines was useless, proposing the Philippines be granted immediate independence so that the country could declare itself neutral in the war, calling upon both Japanese and American forces be withdrawn from the country. The US response in both cases was prompt and unequivocal: the Filipinos could not surrender.⁷⁸

As time went on, with none of the promised reinforcements arriving, the defeat of the Philippine defense force became inevitable. Quezon, Osmeña and MacArthur were evacuated by submarine to Australia, where in relative safety, MacArthur would utter his famous promise to return. On 9 April 1942, depleted by malnutrition, malaria and unyielding Japanese firepower, the Philippine Army on Bataan surrendered to the Japanese. After having valiantly held off the Japanese for three months, the ordeal of the USAFFE forces were not yet over; the defeated army was forced to trek by foot for sixty-five miles to the nearest railroad station. This "Death March" led to the death of ten-thousand troops. The following month, on May 6, Corregidor, too, would fall, marking the complete ~~control~~ invasion by the Japanese Army over the Philippines.

⁷⁷ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 102-105.

⁷⁸ Golay, Frank Hindman. *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1997, pp. 403-419.

Prior to the invasion of the Philippines, the Japanese had constructed a carefully prepared plan of integrating the Philippines and its other new territorial acquisitions in Southeast Asia into a Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere, their term for their enlarged Pacific empire. In many parts of Southeast Asia, they would present themselves as liberators of Asian nations from Western oppression. They constantly spoke of an Asia for Asian peoples.

Such propaganda would have resonated very well in the Philippines half a century prior, when Emilio Aguinaldo and his revolutionaries begged for Japanese intervention in support against their war of independence versus the Spaniards. But the fifty years that had passed since the arrival of the Americans had changed the Philippine outlook, at least in the Northern and Central parts of the archipelago. By the 1940s, the Philippines were the most Westernized people in the region and their national aspirations were about to be fulfilled through an enacted US law promising independence.

Moreover, due to the proximity of Japan, the archipelago housed the largest Japanese community in Southeast Asia, with more than 25,000 persons residing there at the start of the war. The Davao area in Mindanao became particularly noted for its large Japanese immigrant population that cultivated abaca. The fear of a Davao-kuo state akin to the Manchu-kuo state carved out of China by the Japanese imperial army was often expressed. These characteristics contributed to the inability of the Japanese to convince the majority of the Filipino populace to willingly cooperate with the Japanese, let alone see its Imperial Army as anything but an unwanted invader.⁷⁹

Nonetheless, the Japanese still attempted to pursue its propaganda campaign of colonial liberation on the Philippines. It needed to somehow co-opt the existing political elite that already administered much of the colonial government at both the central and local levels. Hence, the Japanese military searched for members of the elite willing to collaborate with the Japanese army in maintaining the governance of the new colony.

As a sign of one-up-man-ship over the Americans, the Japanese decided to declare the independence of the country a few years earlier than the date promised by the US. On 14 October 1943, the Japanese appointed former Senator Jose P. Laurel as the new president of an independent Philippines. Though the independence declaration had all the trappings of a transfer of power – indeed, Aguinaldo himself was tasked with hoisting the Filipino flag – there remained no doubt that the Japanese army remained in firm control over the government.

⁷⁹ Goto, Ken'ichi. *Tensions of Empire: Japan and Southeast Asia in the Colonial and Post-Colonial World*. Singapore University Press: Singapore, 2003. pp. 89-93.

The collaboration with the Japanese among the elite was not strongly challenged by the Commonwealth government-in-exile; prior to his departure to Corregidor, Quezon himself left instructions to the political leaders left behind in Manila to cooperate with the Japanese for the sake of the Filipino people. Nonetheless, it was never easy for the Japanese to maintain the collaboration among its Filipino followers as most Filipinos refused to believe that the Japanese occupation would be more than short-lived. As such, many Japanese collaborators saw themselves consorting with both the Japanese armies and the Filipinos that continued to resist the Japanese.⁸⁰

Not everyone heeded the call of surrender issued by the United States government on 6 May 1942. The wartime resistance movement in the Philippines was one of the most widespread of any occupied country.⁸¹

Anti-Japanese guerilla movements involving local citizens were organized in practically every island. In Mindanao, different guerilla armies consisting of both Christian and Muslim rebels continued to fight against Japanese aggression. These armies were headed by different prominent Mindanaoans such as Salipada Pendatun, Datu Gumbang Piang and Tomas Cabili. In Luzon and the Visayas, guerilla forces were organized by the uncaptured members of the USAFFE and also by local politicians, individual Filipinos and nonmilitary US citizens living in the Philippines. These USAFFE guerillas, comprised mainly of men from the landowning class that had taken military training in the Philippine universities, remained under MacArthur's command from his headquarters in Australia. The USAFFE guerillas succeeded in integrating many of the disparate guerilla organizations throughout the country. Although they sporadically attacked Japanese troops, the USAFFE guerillas were ordered by MacArthur to limit hostilities and contact with the enemy, favoring a "lie-low" policy that concentrated on obtaining information for the Americans in preparation for their expected return. Behind this policy was a fear that large actions against the Japanese were likely to cause reprisals directed against the civilian citizenry, as well as the fear that a successful guerilla movement may endanger the ability of the US to regain the Philippines.⁸²

However, a separate anti-Japanese guerilla group was organized in Central Luzon in the form of the *Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon* (HUKBALAHAP, People's Anti-Japanese Army),

⁸⁰ Tarling, Nicholas. *A Sudden Rampage: The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia 1941-1945*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 2001. pp. 159-174.

⁸¹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 106.

⁸² Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

having full Filipino leadership and an orientation toward national freedom. The *Hukbalahap* or *Huk* army conducted its own guerilla activities apart from the USAFFE in Central Luzon. The *Huk* resistance movement was built upon the remnants of the agrarian and labor movements in Central Luzon that had been dismembered by the Japanese occupiers. The Japanese fascists saw the Communists as their first and last enemy, and arrested the party leaders for propagating anti-Japanese sentiments during the 1930s. In late January, the Communist Party's frontline leadership, including Pedro Abad Santos and Crisanto Evangelista, were arrested by the *Kempeitai*, the Japanese political police. Evangelista would be tortured and killed for rejecting all enemy overtures, while Abad Santos would be spared due to his old age, though would later die in captivity before the end of the Japanese occupation.⁸³

Although the members of the KPMP and AMT had discussed possible armed resistance in the event of an actual invasion by Japan, they had made no concrete plans to that effect. During the chaos spawned by the first few weeks of the invasion, many peasants acted on their own, some even taking the opportunities to attack landlords or members of the Constabulary in retaliation over past grievances. Later, the more experienced peasant leaders who had escaped capture by the Japanese took the initiative in organizing the peasant anger into a guerilla movement.

In late March 1942, several of these armed bands met in Pampanga and baptized themselves as the Hukbalahap. They elected AMT leaders Luis Taruc and Casto Alejandrino, as the commander and vice-commander of the movement. The bulk of the original Huk army core was formed by KPMP and AMT members, although many urban based members of the now-decimated communist party and labor unions would join them later. These prewar organizations were dissolved and reconstituted as the Barrio United Defense Corps (BUDC).

The first communiqués between the Huks and MacArthur sought to unify their movements with that of the remaining USAFFE guerillas, but complications and mutual suspicion sometimes led to hostile relations.⁸⁴ In fact, fierce battles sometimes took place when the Huks and USAFFE units met.⁸⁵

Taruc himself epitomized the continuity between the peasant movements of the 1930s and the Huk movement. A son of a tenant farmer who grew up in Pampanga and Bulacan, he met

⁸³ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers' Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992. pp. 92-93.

⁸⁴ Setsuho, Ikehata and Jose, Ricardo Trota, editors. *The Philippines under Japan: Occupation Policy and Reaction*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999. pp. 3-11.

⁸⁵ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

with Pedro Abad Santos in 1936 to inform the AMT leader of his desire to join the peasant organization. Taruc also joined the Socialist party and held office in the merged Communist Party. From 1937 until the Japanese invasion, he was a major figure in the Pampanga movement and widely respected among the peasantry in Central Luzon.

Alejandrino was of similar background to Abad Santos, was a well-to-do landlord from Pampanga who sought to speak on behalf of the peasants. In the 1930s, he joined the AMT and Socialist party, also holding a position in the merged Communist Party in 1938. He was one among the dozen or so winners during the 1940 elections that had run under the Popular Front ticket, elected as mayor of his hometown Arayat, Pampanga.

While benefiting from the earlier peasant organizations, the Huk pushed the peasant movement in Central Luzon beyond what it had been prior to the Japanese occupation. By unifying peasant resentment towards both the Japanese invaders and their collaborating landowning class, the Huks attracted more and more followers, and by the end of the war more were involved than had been active in peasant organizations during the 1930s. By September 1944, the Huk army itself had around 12,000 guerrillas among 76 squadrons. The experience of the war taught the Huks to become more disciplined in their formation of a Luzon-wide network of leaders and cadres, solidifying the organization formed from the disparate unions of the 1930s. The *Huks* were divided into two fronts: one in Central Luzon, and another in Southern Luzon.⁸⁶

However, the real force of the *Huk* resistance was the strong support of the villagers, who provided the *Huks* with manpower, information and food. A Huk clandestine committee at the barrio level was used to organize the logistics of the army: assessing what the guerillas needs and collecting food from the farmers houses, among others.⁸⁷ Though a number of rural residents supported the *Huks* because of their desire for Philippine independence, majority supported the rebels because of what the new regime had done to their lives: fear, death destruction and repression were far worse than anything they had known before. The adversity brought about by the Japanese occupation reinforced a major lesson villagers had learned in the 1930s – the necessity for collective action.⁸⁸

By the end of the war, the Hukbalahap army had become very effective in resisting Japanese rule by performing numerous tasks to undermine the Japanese army: sabotaging government buildings, assassinating officials, ambushing convoys and stealing supplies, among

⁸⁶ Pomeroy, William. *Les Huks : dans la forêt des Philippines*, François Maspero, Paris, 1968 (1^{ère} Éd. 1963, trad. de l'anglais), p. 46.

⁸⁷ Pomeroy, William. *Les Huks : dans la forêt des Philippines*, François Maspero, Paris, 1968 (1^{ère} Éd. 1963, trad. de l'anglais), p. 37.

⁸⁸ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 67.

others. According to Taruc, the Huks had killed more than 20,000 Japanese citizens or collaborators and weakened the hold of the Japanese army over Central and Southern Luzon. By 1944, the Huk had become the most effective resistance organization on Luzon⁸⁹ and was the only guerilla group that had successfully carved out liberated zones in several provinces north of Manila.⁹⁰

After having driven out the Japanese army in its bailiwicks, the Huks took up the responsibility of ensuring peace and order and their presence kept down the instances of crime in the area. Morphing into more than just a guerrilla movement, the Huks began creating a separate political ruling structure that allowed the liberated villages to govern themselves.

Starting in 1942, elections would be held in thirteen of the twenty-seven municipalities of Nueva Ecija and other Huk-dominated villages throughout Central Luzon, allowing for the creation of a separate government system under the leadership of the a BUDC Council. By 1944, Pampanga, Bulacan, and parts of Tarlac, Zambales, Bataan and Rizal were firmly under Huk control.⁹¹ BUDC Council leaders officiated at weddings, baptisms and funerals, and even issued marriage licenses and baptismal certificates. In a Nueva Ecija barrio, the BUDC government leaders organized a jury of villagers to try a man accused of murder. Not only did this illustrate the peasant movement's development, but it showed innovation because neither a barrio government nor trial by jury was provided for in Philippine law.⁹² The presence of such a political organization was what truly distinguished the *Huks* from the USAFFE and other guerilla movements.

However, more than just a separate political entity, the BUDC Councils became more akin to separate police states than ran every administrative item at each barrio. Their BUDC imposed taxes and communized the barrio economy so that provisions could be laid aside for *Huk* operations. Barrios run by certain undisciplined *Huk* members allowed for the occurrence of grudge killings. The *Huks* themselves admitted that many of the 20,000 casualties that they had inflicted on the enemy were landlords, caretakers working for the landlords, bandits who stole

⁸⁹ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 77-97.

⁹⁰ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 162.

⁹¹ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Rosskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

⁹² Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 77-97.

from peasants or simply personal enemies. As such, the Huk movement had a mixed reputation even among the peasantry in Central Luzon.⁹³

The remnants of the Communist Party that had evaded arrest and remained in the cities, sought to promote their own anti-Japanese activities. The Communist Party, now headed by the wealthy Lava brothers, Vicente and Jesus, both medical doctors, helped organize the disparate labor unions to form the United Front Movement in February 1942 as a civilian counterpart to the military Huk movement. The United Front attempted to promote the communist indoctrination of Huk-controlled peasant areas through the set-up of schools engaged in the explanation of Marxist-Leninist doctrines. Though the peasants failed to learn the meaning of “dialectical materialism,” they did understand the analysis of the class situation and their oppression at the hands of the landlords and the government.

Members of the United Front sought other non-violent means to undermine Japanese rule such as the establishment of mobile radio stations, publication of leaflets, among others. However, strong Japanese military control over the capital made any organizational activities among the urban-based workers very difficult. In 1943, the Japanese military were able to locate the mobile radio and arrest many more of the party leadership. Thus, the urban-based Communist Party virtually evaporated during the war years as the Japanese made it difficult and dangerous for any kind of labor or communist movement to develop.⁹⁴ It must be noted though that the leaders of the Huk army, particularly Taruc and Alejandrino remained Communist Party officials, although they were originally from its rural Socialist Party segment.

Apart from their new political autonomy, the rural areas of Central Luzon showcased improved economic conditions, despite the economic hardships caused by the Japanese invasion. The difficulty faced by the Japanese in integrating the Philippines into their Co-Prosperity Sphere was not just due to the distinct political or cultural situation of the country in comparison to her Southeast Asian neighbors. The economic production of the country was geared towards providing raw materials and agricultural goods for export to the United States. The country's main resource export of sugar was of little value to the Japanese war economy, in stark contrast to the rubber and tin of British Malaya and the petroleum in the Dutch East Indies. Immediately upon the start of the occupation, the Japanese strove to convert the sugarcane plantations in Negros and Central Luzon into cotton farms for the production and export of textiles – something of greater importance to the East Asian economy. The ambitious plan of expanding cotton

⁹³ Lachica, Eduardo. *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt*. Solidaridad Publishing House: Manila, 1971. pp. 110-111.

⁹⁴ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 77-97.

growing areas in the country from 2,000 to 455,000 hectares within a five year period, ended up in a total disaster. The breakneck speed by which the conversion of the agricultural fields was expected to be achieved caused a serious rice shortage as upland rice fields were converted for cotton lands in Luzon.

Prior to the Japanese invasion, the Philippines had not been self-sufficient in rice and food production, relying on imports from its Southeast Asian neighbors paid for from export earnings from the sugar trade. The elimination of the US sugar market and its revenues created a palpable shortage of rice, despite Japanese forced imports from Saigon, Vietnam. The rice shortage was worsened by the destruction of the transport and communication systems wrought by the invasion, the degenerating peace and order situation in the countryside and the draconian attempt of the Japanese administrators to radically change agricultural production patterns. Immediately upon the arrival of the Japanese, rice prices spiked, as rice fields were abandoned by farmers fleeing for safety. Emergency measures to control rice prices and centralize procurement of rice through the *Bigasang Bayan* (National Rice Corporation) failed to stem the shortage and merely led to rationing and the creation of a black market in the rice trade.

The situation was made worse by the unwillingness of disgruntled Filipino to cooperate with their Japanese invaders. In fact, the control of the rice supply became part of their anti-Japanese resistance. The *Huks* mobilized the widest number of people to keep the rice harvest from falling into enemy hands. As soon as the rice ripened, the rice was harvested and rushed to remote places or hidden in any kind of cavity. Release of rice to the market was heavily regulated, with each rice agent given licenses issued by the movement.⁹⁵ The *Huks* also instituted rigid price-control regulations in their controlled towns and barrios, and thus were able to reduce profiteering to a minimum.

Ironically, the rice shortage in the Philippines occurred at a time when the rice fields saw an increase in rice yields. What had changed, however, was the new agrarian conditions brought about by the war that benefited the average peasant. Most of the areas large landowners left for Manila during the invasion and could not or would not return. Ignoring pre-war sharecropping arrangements, peasants kept the entire harvest of the rice fields after supplying the *Huk* forces, instead of supplying the Japanese as ordered by the absentee landlords.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 129-131.

⁹⁶ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance.* KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

As the Philippine economy ground to a halt during the later years of the war, the relative importance of food in exchange for other items became more significant. The declining value of cash revived a barter system, with rice becoming the most sought after commodity. Pianos, jewelry, clothes, decorated chests and other pieces of furniture from the cities flooded the countryside as formerly wealthy persons desperately sought to exchange their remaining possessions for something to eat. As such, the economic situation of the peasants of Central Luzon improved drastically as the rice they grew became the most sought after commodity. It was not an uncommon sight in Central Luzon to see small huts where peasants resided replete with expensive carved four-poster beds and massive armoires. Hence, not only was more rice staying in the hands of the peasants, the peasants themselves obtained absolute control over where the rice would go if it did leave and how much to obtain for it in exchange.

By the end of the war, the shortage in both food crops and cotton products sharpened the anti-Japanese feeling among the populace.⁹⁷ Compounding the situation was the arrival of additional Japanese troops starting in June 1944 in preparation for the immanent invasion by returning American troops. The arriving troops needed to be fed but much of the rice imported from other Japanese territories was on ships that had been sunk on the way.⁹⁸ The acute hunger and famine brought about by the devastation on the economy is among the more traumatic memories retold by the survivors of World War II in the Philippines.

As the war in the European front progressed and the defeat of Axis powers became imminent, the Allies began strategizing for the Pacific front. The planned reconquest of Southeast Asia in 1944 and 1945 was drawn as a two pronged attack through Burma in the west and the Pacific islands in the east, bypassing most of Southeast Asia through a direct attack on Japan itself. However, MacArthur, partly for political reasons wanted to regain rather than bypass the Philippines. This decision gave the Philippines the unfortunate designation of being the only Southeast Asian territory occupied by Japan where a large-scale military campaign of reconquest was mounted.

Beginning in October 1944, when the first US soldiers landed in Leyte, the Philippines became among the bloodiest battlegrounds of World War II. The refusal of the Japanese Army to surrender to the superior force of the returning US army and their Filipino guerilla supporters required that each territory or city be captured via intense fighting. Manila itself had to be

⁹⁷ Yoshiko, Nagano. "Cotton Production under Japanese Rule: 1942-1945." In Setsuho, Ikehata and Jose, Ricardo Trota, editors. *The Philippines under Japan: Occupation Policy and Reaction*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999. pp. 171-195.

⁹⁸ Jose, Ricardo T. "The Rice Shortage and Countermeasures during the Occupation." In Setsuho, Ikehata and Jose, Ricardo Trota, editors. *The Philippines under Japan: Occupation Policy and Reaction*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1999. pp. 171-195.

retaken through American carpet bombing and building by building, street by street warfare, killing a large proportion of its inhabitants and turning Manila into the most devastated city in the world after Warsaw. Even after being driven out of the major cities, the Japanese forces dug into the mountainous interior of the country. The Japanese army would continue fighting in the jungles only until the atomic bombs that fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 forced the emperor to finally surrender.

The recapture of the Philippines by the American armed forces and the devastation it wrought was utterly unnecessary. In fact, by the time of Japanese surrender, many parts of Southeast Asia, such as Malaya, Singapore and Indo-China had not been recaptured by the Allies. For these colonies, the defeat of their European colonial masters at the hands of an Asian country provided an irreparable loss of prestige to the 'superiority' of the Western colonial system. Countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia prevented the returning French and Dutch armies from retaking their lands and used the opportunity to successfully declare themselves independent. For much of Southeast Asia, the Japanese occupation provided a positive historical effect, as it provided the impetus for the end of colonialism, an effect that was absent in a country that had been promised independence ten years prior.⁹⁹

When compared to the other countries of Southeast Asia under Japanese control, the occupation of the Philippines stands out as an extreme example of both human and material devastation. Over one million Filipinos were wounded or killed during the Occupation. Manila's entire business district, 70 percent of public utilities, three-quarters of factories and stores, 80 percent of the finest residential areas were all destroyed. Cebu City, the country's second largest city was also devastated.¹⁰⁰

Ironically, the impact of World War II on the Philippine-American colonial relationship was the emergence of a special relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, erasing any historical memory of the bloody occupation by the United States little more than a generation earlier. The brutality of the Japanese occupiers made the American colonizers appear benign by comparison, while the image of Filipinos and Americans spilling blood in union in defense of the archipelago evoked a sense of fraternal solidarity among two peoples. Till today, save for the Moros in the South, the Americans are still seen as 'liberators' of the Philippines, despite the fact that the high death toll and wanton destruction of Manila and other Philippine cities was a consequence of US carpet bombing raids caused by an unnecessary American re-conquest.

⁹⁹Tarling, Nicholas. *A Sudden Rampage: The Japanese Occupation of Southeast Asia 1941-1945*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 2001. pp. 120-123.

¹⁰⁰Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 135.

The defeat of the Japanese at the hands of the returning American army was welcomed by the *Huks*. As word of their return spread, the *Huks* increased their efforts at overthrowing the Japanese regime. From December 1944 to February 1945, the *Huk* squadrons pressed the Japanese, liberating towns along their way. The *Huk* army offered their services as guides, informants, and even fought side-by-side with the US army as the pockets of Japanese resistance throughout Central Luzon were eliminated. The US army was surprised to see how in certain provinces, the Japanese opposition had been totally wiped out, with the areas already under full Huk control, with elected local governments. Provisional governments up to the provincial levels were established with Alejandrino placed as governor of Pampanga, Jesus Lava in Laguna, Juan Feleo in Nueva Ecija among others. The Huks believed that presentation of full Huk administration would force the US government to recognize their political organization and their acceptance by the reestablished Commonwealth government.¹⁰¹

However, the Commonwealth government, now run by a returning President Osmeña who had taken over upon the death of Quezon in August 1944, replaced most of the *Huk* men. The appointees eventually gave way to appointees of the ruling *Nacionalista Party*, even if many of them were under the cloud of claims that they had been collaborating with the Japanese during the war. The *Huks* were not only disappointed by the non-recognition of their guerilla army by the returning US government, but moreover was described as a bandit organization intending to establish a communist government in the Philippines after the war. Since the USAFFE units were the first to make contact with the Americans, the Huks felt these units influenced American action against them.

Worse, the American military, distrusting the Huks to the end, ordered their disarmament and began arresting its leaders. Taruc and Alejandrino would be captured by the American army on 8 April 1945 and imprisoned for seven months under charges of communism and even of collaboration with the Japanese. Alejandrino was finally released after the Commonwealth government found no case against him. Taruc was also released shortly after, but he complained of being maltreated during his imprisonment.¹⁰² Ironically, Taruc's guerillas, who were first to offer their services to the Commonwealth and who probably suffered most, ended the war

¹⁰¹ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

¹⁰² Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

unrewarded and in disgrace.¹⁰³ Worse, some members of the Huks would be executed by 'reactionary troops' under the command of US soldiers: 108 Huk belonging to the 77 CIE were executed in Bulacan in 1945.

Nonetheless, the defeat of the Japanese in 1945 provided an air of optimism in the countryside that the three years of war had extinguished. Although the peasants understood the difficulty that lay ahead, stemming from the need to rebuild from the destruction wrought by the war, as well as from the need to deal with the returning landlords, their experience of peasant organization and self-government empowered them and provided them with legitimate avenues of projecting political power to improve their lot. *Huk* leaders, such as Alejandrino and Feleo, discussed means by which the returning Philippine government could be influenced so that it would take a more progressive stance on the social and economic issues confronting the nation. Because of the Hukbalahap's achievements and political strength in Central Luzon, they expected that Osmeña's government would have to take their interests into account.¹⁰⁴

Unfortunately, the optimism of the *Huks* would be dashed by the political struggles fraught in the subsequent months. Within a couple of years, the newly independent Philippines would find itself fighting another war, this time among its own compatriots.

Part 5. The Changing Political Struggle under the New Republic (1946-1963)

The end of the Second World War returned the intense level of optimism to a devastated nation. Though certain sectors desired a postponement of the long-awaited recognition of the Philippine independence struggle given the ravished circumstances the Philippines found itself in right after the war, the overwhelming desire of the Filipino people to finally complete the struggle they had begun at the turn of the century made the independence proclamation impossible to defer. So on 4 July 1946, the United States flag was lowered and the Republic of the Philippines was once again declared an independent nation.

Though many Filipinos believed that it would, the independence proclamation did not resolve was all of the pressing political, economic and social problems of the new nation. One problem that the new Philippine government had to deal with was the issue of collaboration with the much-hated Japanese during the war. Many of the Filipino ruling classes had joined the Philippine government that was set-up by the Japanese for reasons of survival, private gain, or even the supposed need to protect the Filipino people from further abuses.

¹⁰³ Lachica, Eduardo. *Huk: Philippine Agrarian Society in Revolt*. Solidaridad Publishing House: Manila, 1971. pp. 117.

¹⁰⁴ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 77-97.

As the US reinvasion forces neared Luzon in December 1944, Japanese-appointed Philippine President Jose Laurel and his cabinet fled from Manila to Baguio. In April 1945, with the American troops advancing towards Baguio, some cabinet members such as Manuel Roxas, Jose Yulo and Quintin Paredes escaped into the American lines. Interestingly, the press release authorized by MacArthur's command declared the capture of Paredes, Yulo and the others, and the liberation of Roxas.¹⁰⁵ Roxas would be immediately flown to Manila and reunited with his old friend MacArthur, returned to active duty as a colonel on MacArthur's staff and built up as among the ablest Filipino leaders.

However, it remained difficult to understand the distinction between Roxas' role during the Japanese occupation with the rest of his compatriots that were labeled as collaborators. Prior to the war, Roxas was designated as the presidential successor in case of capture of Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmeña. He was captured in April 1942 and was offered the presidency of the puppet republic but pleaded having a history of coronary trouble. He later remained as the chief adviser of Laurel, was appointed chairman of the Economic Planning Board and the *Bigasang Bayan* (National Rice Corporation), and basically remained at work in the Laurel cabinet until the end.

Yet his absolution under the hands of MacArthur gave Roxas the needed political boost to ascend the presidency. He established a Liberal Party split from the dominant *Nacionalista* Party and formalized a two-party system that would be in existence for the subsequent three decades. Endorsed by both Quezon's widow, Aurora, and MacArthur himself, Roxas was primed to defeat the incumbent but aging President Osmeña, now much-weakened by his wartime exile, in the 1946 election to select the first president of the Republic of the Philippines.

In contrast, the rest of the members of the wartime Philippine government had to undergo trial to prove that they should not be held liable for treason. Prominent wartime politicians, including Laurel himself, were tried under a people's court, many of them claiming to have worked with the Japanese under the guise of nationalism. Not unexpectedly, Roxas in 1948 decided to grant amnesty to all collaborators, although less than one percent among the wartime leadership was really ever convicted.¹⁰⁶ Thus the political elite remained intact, with the war diminishing neither the size nor the authority of the mainstream establishment.

¹⁰⁵ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 122-123.

¹⁰⁶ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Rosskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance.* KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 74-75.

The retention of elite power was now in direct opposition to the newly found power experienced by the *Huks* during the war. Returning landlords, whose own wealth had been devastated by the war, demanded more from the peasants but provided them with less. Most became very stingy with the agricultural loans, provided little money to pay for agricultural expenses, and some even demanded back pay for unpaid rents from the Japanese occupation period. To peasants that had experienced their brief moment of relative freedom under their elected *Huk* government these demands were unacceptable, and many villagers once again joined peasant organizations and agitated for larger shares of the harvest. In response, government troops, the Philippine Constabulary and private armies funded by wealthier landlords were tasked to violently convince villagers to accept the new status quo. For example, in December 1945, landlords from Talavera, Nueva Ecija tasked their armed guards to forcibly take a fifty percent share of the harvest, despite an earlier agreement to limit the landlord share to 40 percent. These social conflicts were made worse by the state of the farming infrastructure, with many irrigation canals, roads and communication lines remaining inoperable due to the wartime fighting.¹⁰⁷

Despite this fighting, many in the peasantry resorted to peaceful pre-war means to obtain solutions to their problems. In May 1945, numerous peasants supported the creation of the *Pambansang Kaisahan ng mga Magbubukid* (PKM, National Peasant Union) – under the presidency of Mateo del Castillo, a Communist Party politburo member, – which unified the surviving members of the *Hukbalahap*, KPMP, AMT and other peasant groups that preceded it. The PKM specifically lobbied for larger crop shares of up to 60 percent to the tenant, the sharing of agricultural expenses, low interest loans from rural banks, guaranteed rice rations, among other pro-peasant reforms. Its membership rapidly grew to 500,000, nearly four times the combined membership of the two largest prewar peasant associations: the KPMP and AMT.¹⁰⁸

As an organization, the PKM was more advanced than earlier peasant associations. The haphazard and uncoordinated methods of the AMT were replaced by smooth-running committees and highly involved membership. The PKM leaders organized sessions to educate villagers on agrarian problems and on leadership to create future heads for the movement.

A similar reorganization of the labor unions that were dormant during the war occurred in the urban areas. In July 1945, from the ashes of the pre-war labor movements sprung the Congress of Labor Organizations (CLO). The movement was spearheaded by Guillermo Capadocia, Felixberto Olalia, Mariano Balgos and other surviving members of the Communist

¹⁰⁷ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 118-126.

¹⁰⁸ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, pp. 141-143.

Party, many of whom had fled to the rural areas to join the *Huks* during the war. Their limited number at the onset, depleted by both pre-war and wartime anti-communist policies, forced the Communists to align themselves with other less radical labor groups, like the journalists union and the union of railroad workers.

The serious economic conditions of post-war Manila gave the CLO credibility as it focused its attention on the working conditions. The war had caused tremendous dislocations in the Philippine economy, production was drastically reduced, while the average cost of living in Manila by mid-1945 was eight times what it had been in 1937. The nightmare for most workers that for those that had jobs, they were still paid with prewar wages.¹⁰⁹ The CLO utilized prewar tactics of aiding striking workers, providing lawyers to represent workers and sending petitions to management as a means to improve the lot of the worker, allowing it to generate certain increases in labor salaries even during these difficult times. By the end of the 1940s, the CLO had around 10,000 card-carrying members.

However, the strongest weapon of the PKM and to a lesser extent because of its smaller size, the CLO, was the ballot box. The Communist Party, headed by Vicente Lava, convened a conference with the existing labor and peasant unions in September 1944 to discuss plans of action in expectation of the end of the Japanese occupation. The results of this conference became the basis for the creation of a new political party, the Democratic Alliance (DA), which was formed in July 1945, and included the Communist Party, PKM and CLO among its membership. Much like its Communist Party predecessor and formulator, the DA represented another attempt to unite the two streams of impoverished voters: the Central Luzon based peasant movement and the urban leftwing laborers, into a single political force. The program of the party was to prevent the Japanese collaborators from taking office and to formulate a more progressive economic stance towards workers and peasants.¹¹⁰

For the 1946 election, the DA decided to endorse the presidential candidacy of Osmeña in order to prevent the collaborator, Roxas, from taking office. However, the DA organizations in the provinces nominated their own candidates for the national legislature, the only other positions up for election during that year. The DA served a similar purpose as the Popular Front party of the 1930s, but was far more coherent than what the Popular Front had been. And most importantly, the DA was extremely successful.

¹⁰⁹ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers' Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992. pp. 92-100.

¹¹⁰ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 133-143.

In the elections of April 1946, the DA succeeded in getting a respectable number of representatives elected to the national legislature. Six of the nine DA candidates in Central Luzon were elected to the House of Representatives and the extent of their victories was overwhelming. *Huk* Commander in Chief, Luis Taruc and PKM leader Amado Yuson received 85 percent of the vote in Pampanga.¹¹¹ The DA candidate in Tarlac received an estimated 75 percent of the vote. The Communist Party Secretary General, Jesus Lava, also won a seat in Bulacan. However, their following did not spread outside their bailiwick of Central Luzon. The two DA candidates in the capital Manila fared extremely poorly, barely obtaining ten percent of the votes of the winning candidates. The same losing fate was achieved by the DA's 12 other candidates in the rest of the country.¹¹²

Despite their overwhelming victory in Central Luzon, the newly-elected Roxas government refused to allow the six DA congressmen-elect from taking their seats. By this time, Central Luzon had erupted in tremendous violence as the repression from the returning landlords and the government forces had turned worse, forcing many peasants to retake their World War II arms in reprisal. After the April elections, repressions became worse and clashes between government forces and armed peasants escalated. Roxas used the violence as a pretext to declare widespread irregularities in the elections and charge the six DA congressmen plus a seventh congressman-elect supporter from Bulacan with acts of terrorism.

The expulsion of these elected congressmen from the peasantry was not just a reaction of an elitist president fearing the rise of a labor- and peasant-based opposition that could eventually contest nationally the candidates of the twin elite political parties of the *Nacionalista* and Liberal Parties that had dominated elections in the country. Roxas' decision to expel was predicated on the need for the national legislature to pass an onerous bill that the overly nationalistic DA candidates vehemently opposed.

The United States government had entered into two treaties with the about-to-be independent Philippine government under the supposed pretext that it would help the development of the country. Despite the suggested benefits for the Philippines, the United States thought it best to ensure the approval of the treaty by the legislature by stipulating the condition that only its approval would allow for the release of US\$620 million in rehabilitation funds –

¹¹¹ Chapman, Abraham. "Note on the Philippine Elections," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 2, June 1946, pp. 193-198.

¹¹² The losing Democratic Alliance candidates ran in the following congressional districts: Bataan (Lone), Cebu (Seventh), Ilocos Norte (First), Iloilo (First, Third, Fourth and Fifth), Laguna (Second), Negros Oriental (Third), Palawan (Lone), Quezon (First), Rizal (First), Manila (North) and Manila (South). Some districts had multiple DA candidates.

funds that the war-devastated country desperately needed. The first treaty was the Military Bases Agreement, which gave the US the right to maintain military bases in the country for 99-years after independence. The second was the Philippine Trade Act which extended the free trade relationship between the US and the Philippines; this preferential access to the undamaged US domestic market was something many agricultural exporters desperately wanted. This second bill, however, entailed additional provisions that obnoxiously infringed on Philippine sovereignty including US control over Philippine monetary and exchange policy.

Its most notorious provision was the 'parity rights' clause, which accorded to US citizens the same rights to land ownership, natural resource exploitation and business activities, industrial activities that were stipulated under the Philippine constitution as reserved for Filipino citizens only.¹¹³ In order to give Americans such a favored 'parity' status, the country had to amend the constitution which required the vote of three-fourths of all the members of the legislature. The absence of the disqualified DA candidates allowed the parity amendment to pass by one vote.

This expulsion of their elected officials only worsened the violence in the Central Luzon, with all of the rising unrest and criminality blamed solely on the DA and the *Huks*. This accusation was not fully made up as Taruc himself admitted that the *Huk* did have some rogue elements that used their peasant army for private gain. Nonetheless, the violence that was perpetrated and blamed on the *Huks* was a minor percentage of the instances of violence that were also conducted by the landlords and their private armies, as well as by the mailed fist policy of the Philippine armed forces, with Roxas feeling no sympathy for these voters that had supported his opponent. The increase in violence drove many peasants underground and rejoined the *Huk* army.

Yet despite their expulsion, DA leaders such as Jesus Lava still refused to be drawn into armed rebellion against the government and continued to push the Communist Party position that parliamentary struggle was still possible. DA leaders continued to meet with the government in hopes of finding an amicable solution. But on 24 August 1946, noted peasant leader and *Huk* spokesman Juan Feleo was kidnapped by armed men in military uniform while on his way to a meeting with Taruc and Casto Alejandrino. His body would be found floating in the Pampanga river in the following month. Though no one ever figured out who kidnapped and killed Feleo, it was highly suspect that civilian guards, possibly under orders from Central Luzon landlords, had committed the crime. Feleo's murder ended any attempts by the *Huk* leadership to remain pacifist. By September 1946, just a few weeks after the country's independence was finally

¹¹³ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 170-173.

recognized by the United States, Central Luzon was once again at war and the *Huk* rebellion had begun.¹¹⁴

Sadly, despite the steamroller tactics employed to pass the Philippine Trade Act treaty, US capital did not flow into the Philippines in substantial amounts. At the time of independence in 1946, direct investments of non-resident Americans stood barely at US\$100 million. These had climbed to only US\$150 million by 1950 and to US\$188 million three years later. The climate of civil war and political instability that developed, partially caused by the Machiavellian machinations required for the passage of the treaty, made many foreign investors rightfully cautious. The Trade Act established near total trade and investment domination of US businesses in the Philippines, but its very operation was ruinous in its effects.¹¹⁵

In both size and organizational strength, the *Huk* peasant rebellion grew between 1946 and 1948. The peasant rebels formed squads and squadrons similar to those created during the war. Their military actions included fighting the police and civilian guards, ambushing patrols and destroying the properties of landlords that abused their tenants. In response, Roxas declared the HMB and PKM as outlaws in March 1948 and waged an all-out war against the armed peasants.¹¹⁶

The government would suffer a major setback when in April 1948, Roxas suddenly died of a heart attack. His vice president and successor, Elpidio Quirino, was widely seen as lacking the ability to lead the government, and in fact, would be hounded by corruption allegations throughout his tenure. Nonetheless, Quirino attempted to make peace with the Huks by offering amnesty to the rebels, provided they lay down their arms. The failure of the amnesty drive because of the Huk's insistence of keeping their arms led to an escalation of the conflict, with the Hukbalahap army re-labeling itself as the Hukbong Magpapalaya ng Bayan (HMB, People's Liberation Army).¹¹⁷

At this point, the Communist Party, which had previously avowed the armed rebellion, began to take full control over the leadership of the HMB. The party would infuse the HMB rebellion with Marxist-Leninist thought, aiming to establish Soviet-type socialism in the Philippines. The HMB's vision included a mass nationalization of industry and the seizure and

¹¹⁴ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 133-143.

¹¹⁵ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 161.

¹¹⁶ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 174-199.

¹¹⁷ van der Kroef, Justus M. "Communism and Reform in the Philippines," *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 1., Spring, 1973, pp. 29-58.

redistribution of vast landholdings for the peasantry. The Philippine movement was no longer just a movement based on the existing social conditions of Central Luzon but as part of a larger struggle against imperialism and exploitation that was transpiring worldwide.¹¹⁸

In 1949, the Quirino administration would suffer from a political and economic crisis that would fan the flames of the rebellion and stoke fear in the United States that its ex-colony would become communist. During the early post-war years, the Philippines had enjoyed windfall dollar receipts through the spending by American soldiers, US disbursements for salaries for local personnel, veterans' payments to Philippine soldiers, and of course, the war reparations payments themselves. Much of the war reparations, which should have been invested in the production of goods and services needed for economic recovery, went largely toward the consumption of American-made goods, such as radios, Lucky Strike cigarettes, apples and oranges, that had been absent before the war. Worse, war funds were utilized by corrupt government officials for distribution to those closest to the regime or even for their own private gain. For example, the Rehabilitation Finance Corporation, tasked to sell 200 million pesos worth of surplus military property turned over only 28 million pesos to the government after three years of operation, with the rest never having been accounted for.¹¹⁹ By the end of the decade, with the war damage payments having been paid out, this pool of foreign fund inflows had disappeared, creating a balance of payments crisis and an economy on the brink of collapse.

The economic crisis was worsened by the tremendous government spending on the November 1949 elections, which pitted the unpopular incumbent Quirino against wartime president Laurel.¹²⁰ The massive fraud and terror employed by Quirino to win far exceeded any such previous episode in Philippine history. Official records estimated more than one fifth of the ballots were said to be spurious and many Filipinos wisecracked that even the birds and bees voted in some precincts.¹²¹ By December 1949, the government was faced with imminent bankruptcy, as its fiscal irresponsibility made its international reserves decline to critical levels.

It was unsurprising that the rebellion was strongest from about this point until early 1951, with the HMB numbered between 11,000 to 15,000 fighters, roughly equal to the armed strength of the wartime *Huk* army. The HMB invoked support from a mass base of about one to two

¹¹⁸ Kerkvliet, Benedict. *The Huk Rebellion: A Study of Peasant Revolt in the Philippines*. New Day Publishing, Quezon City, 1979, p. 224-225.

¹¹⁹ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 170-173.

¹²⁰ Doronila, Amando. *The State, Economic Transformation and Political Change in the Philippines, 1946-1972*. Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1992. pp. 50-52.

¹²¹ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), p. 112.

million rural peasants. Besides becoming more numerous, the HMB had become better organized than its wartime predecessor, dividing itself into field commands and battalions. The HMB maintained guerilla tactics such as robbing payroll offices or intercepting cargo trucks to pay for their expenses. Supplementing their confiscations were peasant contributions and their own agricultural production bases in the mountains. In 1950, rumors circulated around Manila social circles that the Huks were just months away from capturing the presidential palace;¹²² a rumor President Quirino himself likely believed, mooring a motor launch beside the palace to evacuate him and his family.¹²³

But the HMB rebellion would not prosper. The US government, fearful that its former colony would fall into the hands of the communist movement, increased military aid to the Philippines to improve training and provide better equipment to the Philippine armed forces. The Philippine government successfully put down the HMB rebellion by means of large-scale military operations combined with a policy of attraction.

The US government helped reorganized the Philippine Army and Constabulary into battalion combat teams and beginning in 1950, massive searches and screening campaigns were initiated in areas where the HMB was thought to exist. The government initiated a campaign to provide 'cash incentives' of up to 100,000 pesos (US\$50,000 at prevailing exchange rates) leading to the capture of HMB rebels. In October 1950, the anti-HMB campaign made a major breakthrough when it captured the entire Communist Party politburo, including Jose Lava, the lawyer-brother of Jesus and Vicente, in a raid in Manila, creating a public impression that the movement was losing its steam.¹²⁴

Another important but less understood reason for the failure of the Huk rebellion is the migration by many impoverished peasants to less populated areas in Mindanao. The program that began as an abject failure during the early American period, succeeded dramatically during the post-war years. In the first 15 years of the postwar period, more than a million people from the northern and central islands moved to the southern 'frontier' of Mindanao. This migration was largely spontaneous and had little government support. Utilizing family and village networks, migrants from Pampanga and other Central Luzon provinces, as well as other inhabitants of Cebu

¹²² Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 174.

¹²³ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), p. 112.

¹²⁴ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), p. 116-117.

and Bohol moved their families to the Misamis, Agusan and Davao provinces in Northern and Eastern Mindanao. While migrants from the Ilocos region in Luzon, plus the islands of Panay and Negros settled in the Cotabato region in Southern Mindanao. The wholesale migration of communities from the Huk-influenced areas indirectly aided government efforts to deprive guerillas of their peasant supporters. By easing pressure in these politically explosive regions, migration postponed further class conflict by at least another generation.

This phenomenon was well understood by the government, prompting them to create programs to resettle surrendered *Huk* supporters and sympathizers. The Economic Development Corporation (EDCOR) project settled *ex-Huks* to Lanao and Cotabato and provided these rebels with a piece of land and a way out of poverty.¹²⁵ Although by the end of the EDCOR program fewer than 1,000 families were resettled with government support, the propaganda depicting the rehabilitation efforts depleted the mass base of the HMB.¹²⁶

The US government also had to ensure that the Philippine economy would return to a path of economic prosperity. Forced under the Philippine Trade Act to seek approval from the US government for any changes in its exchange rate policy, the Philippine government had to persuade the US president to agree to the imposition of exchange and import controls. Alarmed by the victory of Communist forces in China that same year and the growing radicalization of Filipino peasants, the US government realized that the severity of the crisis could lead to a communist takeover of the country and approved the plan for the Philippine Central bank to control access to foreign currency. But what was approved as an emergency measure was increasingly utilized by the Philippine government as a mechanism to regain its economic sovereignty through import controls and industrialize via import substitution.¹²⁷ As such, the economic crisis of 1949 would serve as the turning point for the reinvigoration of the Philippine economy. New industries, especially in the manufacturing sector, were set up, practically from scratch and many local and foreign investors began investing in the Philippines.

The improvement in the image of the government coincided with a deteriorating image of the HMB rebels. The brutal murder of Aurora Quezon, widow of former president Manuel Quezon, by renegade HMB rebels in Nueva Ecija in 1949 shocked the nation. Mrs. Quezon, who had been involved in social work and was chairman of the Philippine Red Cross at the time of her

¹²⁵ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 176-177.

¹²⁶ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Roskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 116.

¹²⁷ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 170-173.

death, was regarded by many citizens as a combination queen-mother and patron saint. The circumstances surrounding her death inflicted a severe propaganda defeat on the HMB movement.¹²⁸

But the most important events that led to the improvement of the government's image was the 1951 elections, which in stark comparison with the 1949 bloodbath, was generally peaceful and honest. This electoral reform occurred through the help of the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) that pressured President Quirino into allowing the newly installed Defense Secretary, Ramon Magsaysay to use the Philippine Army to oversee the elections, under the pretext that its results had to be protected from the HMB.¹²⁹ The US also provided support for the creation of a citizen's organization called the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL) that also ensured the cleanliness of the balloting.

The promise of clean elections revived the sentiment of faith in the Philippine government and drove many of the HMB support base to vote, ignoring the boycott call by the Communist Party that had lost all faith in the country's democratic processes. The Communist Party later admitted in December 1951 that the masses no longer recognized the immediate need for armed struggle and majority of them greatly favored the existence of law and order. Almost a decade of constant unrest had diminished the masses' will towards continued support for a failing rebellion.

It also turned out that that peasants had radically different notions of socialism; its version remained in the realm of improving their lot rather than radically changing the political set-up of the country as the Communist Party had continually espoused. Peasant support for the armed resistance was generally founded merely as a defense against military abuses rather than an armed struggle to seize state power.¹³⁰ Any sign of government transformation in the form of less oppression and agricultural reform diminished peasant support for the rebellion.

But the coup-de-grace occurred in the subsequent election in 1953 when Magsaysay himself won the presidency. His role as the savior of Philippine elections and chief architect of the HMB losses made his candidacy unbeatable. His image as a man of the people was further cultivated with reports of his touring the countryside and eating with the peasants. Running on a platform of land reform and clean governance, he defeated Quirino by a landslide.

¹²⁸ www.wikipedia.com, 17 August 2007.

¹²⁹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 200-201.

¹³⁰ Abinales, Patricio and Amoroso, Donna. *State and Society in the Philippines*. Anvil Publishing: Pasig, 2005, p. 174-175.

Magsaysay came through with his promise with the passage of an Agricultural Tenancy Act in 1954 and a Land Reform Act in 1955. Though both acts were riddled with loopholes by the landlord-ridden Congress, their mere passage solidified Magsaysay's image as a pro-poor reformer. Despite his early enthusiasm for land reform, Magsaysay avoided the key issue of structural change, which would have pitted him against entrenched landowning interests. As such, he emphasized programs with immediate benefits, such as the promises of new lands through the EDCOR program. He even ran programs for purely cosmetic results, such as his opening of the presidential palace to the masses and his rural projects that consisted of the digging of artesian wells in far-flung areas; which despite their limited impact in improving rural welfare, remain engrained in popular memory today. Though Magsaysay's policies met a few critical peasant needs, it ignored the broader issues of land ownership and tenancy conditions.¹³¹

However, Magsaysay did succeed in eliminating corruption in many sectors of the government. Not having relied on any vested interest or political parties for his elections, Magsaysay was free to appoint a cadre of idealistic technocrats to improve government services; among those he appointed were Manuel Manahan, who cleaned up the notoriously Philippine Customs. Throughout the Magsaysay presidency, there was a notable absence of charges of corruption against the administration, in stark contrast to his predecessors. By sheer weight of his charisma and accomplishments, Magsaysay single-handedly brought many Filipino's faith in the government.

A few months into the Magsaysay presidency, in May 1954, Luis Taruc, the supreme commander of the HMB surrendered and practically ended the HMB-led civil war. With the death of the HMB rebellion came the death of the Communist Party and most tragically, of the Democratic Alliance.

The labor movement was also assuaged by the improvements in the country's economy. The import and exchange controls begun in 1949 allowed the Philippines to embark on a massive industrialization program that allowed the economy to steadily grow during the 1950s and 1960s. Beside the protectionist policies, the industrialization program provided tax exemptions, liberal credit facilities and windfall profits from a still overvalued currency that allowed for a rapid increase in industrial production in the country. The country's gross domestic product (GDP) grew at an almost 8 percent annual clip during the Quirino presidency and by almost 7 percent per annum during the Magsaysay era.¹³² The improving economy, coupled with stable prices,

¹³¹ Scott, James. *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976, pp. 216-217.

¹³² Philippine National Statistical Coordination Board, 2006. www.nscb.gov.ph.

diminished the sentiment of exploitation from the labor sector, and the industrial scene avoided disruptive disputes during this time.¹³³

The weakening of the urban communist movement during the 1950s was not just a function of an improving economy. Government action was very critical in splintering the union movement and preventing its conversion into a potent political force. As part of its anti-*Huk* movement, the government viewed the CLO as a front for communism and began a crackdown by capturing the CLO's leadership in the early 1950s. Ironically, this crackdown occurred when the more radical communists of the organization, such as Mariano Balgos and Capadocia, had already left the organization to join the Huks in the Central Luzon. The more moderate unions, such as the Manila Railroad union, decided to also secede from the organization, lest they too be repressed by the government.¹³⁴ In April 1951, the Labor Secretary revoked the legal standing of the CLO and its leaders, including its chairman Amado Hernandez, were arrested and charged with sedition.¹³⁵ With no one willing to replace its leadership, by the end of that year, the CLO would be dead.

The death of the CLO signaled the extermination of not only a unifying umbrella labor group but also of the communist ideology among the existing company unions. Organized labor shifted ideologies from the political radicalism of the 1930s and 40s to the more 'bread and butter' unionism, deeply eroding whatever class awareness the union movement had shown in earlier decades.¹³⁶ Moreover, the union movements became quite fragmented, especially as new, unrelated industries sprung up around the country.

The government repression was also coupled with the passage of more pro-labor policies, such as the passage of Industrial Peace Act in 1953, which liberalized registration procedures for unions – previously used as a weapon to control unions – and encouraged conciliation of industrial disputes. The rural-based legislators found it politically advantageous to support legislation for urban workers, since agricultural workers were generally exempted from these laws. Ironically, the laborers were able to obtain concessionary legislation, despite the fact that unlike its rural-based counterpart, the labor unions were never able to become a significant electoral bloc and garner electoral victories.

¹³³ Doronila, Amando. *The State, Economic Transformation and Political Change in the Philippines, 1946-1972*. Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1992. pp. 60-70.

¹³⁴ Kerkvliet, Melinda Trias. *Manila Workers' Unions: 1900-1950*. New Day Publishing: Quezon City, 1992. pp. 92-103.

¹³⁵ Dejillas, Leopoldo. *Trade Union Behavior in the Philippines: 1946-1990*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1994. pp. 36-37.

¹³⁶ Doronila, Amando. *The State, Economic Transformation and Political Change in the Philippines, 1946-1972*. Oxford University Press: Singapore, 1992. pp. 60-70.

As such, the trade unions that were created during the 1950s and 1960s, such as Olalia's National Federation of Labor Unions (NAFLU) and former CLO chairman Cipriano Cid's Philippine Association of Free Labor Union (PAFLU), although still socialist in its roots and leadership, became less militant in their actions. These unions resorted primarily to collective bargaining and arbitrations and as such, there were hardly any street demonstrations or rallies during these periods. Even plant-level strikes diminished significantly in the mid-50s.¹³⁷

Interestingly, the 1950s saw the rise of a new form of trade unionism coming from two fronts. The first was an attempt by the Philippine government to control the Philippine labor movement by itself organizing the National Confederation of Trade Unions (NACTU) in 1950, supposedly as a counterweight against the communist unions. The government favored conservative unions that joined the NACTU and provided funding or even government positions to union leaders that followed their bidding. It would later become apparent that the NACTU, which was led by Jose Figueras, Labor Secretary, was solely being used to promote the political ambition and senatorial campaign of its leader.

Later that year, another group of workers who refused to be dominated by the communists, politicians, governments, employers or racketeers founded the Federation of Free Workers (FFW). Founded by lawyer Juan Tan and Fr. Walter Hogan of the Society of Jesus, the FFW provided an alternative to communism that was based on Catholic social teaching. At the onset, it fought mainly for labor union independence, vocally attacking government officials that used unions to further their own ambitions. Later, with the passage of the 1953 Industrial Peace Act which diminished government control over unions, the FFW's democratic struggle subsided and it focused on economic issues, particularly on providing legal aid during collective-bargaining negotiations.¹³⁸

A similar movement was formed for the peasant classes with the creation of the Federation of Free Farmers (FFF) in 1953. Inspired by the work of his former teacher, Fr. Hogan, lawyer and landlord Jeremias Montemayor, together with FFW official Fernando Esguerra, organized the FFF after the HMB revolt had lost its momentum. The FFF sought harmony, instead of conflict, among classes and also focused on Catholic social teachings in its ideological bias. It advocated family-sized farms rather than collectivization of farmlands as a means for improving farmer welfare. After the collapse of the HMB and with it the PKM and the other pre-

¹³⁷ Dejillas, Leopoldo. *Trade Union Behavior in the Philippines: 1946-1990*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1994. pp. 36-38.

¹³⁸ Dejillas, Leopoldo. *Trade Union Behavior in the Philippines: 1946-1990*. Ateneo de Manila University Press: Quezon City, 1994. pp. 54-55.

war peasant movements, the FFF became the dominant peasant movement of the 1950s and 1960s.¹³⁹

The country under Magsaysay seemed to be proceeding towards a new dawn. But unfortunately, fate intervened. The universally beloved President Magsaysay died in a plane crash on 17 March 1957. Neither his replacement, Vice President Carlos Garcia nor his subsequent successor, Diosdado Macapagal had the charisma or the reformist zeal of Magsaysay. In fact, the moment Garcia took over the presidency, Magsaysay's reformers were eased out of their positions and the country saw a return of many of the corrupt practices that had existed during the time of Quirino. Within six months into the Garcia presidency, false bills of lading became standard at the Manila harbor, coconut products were smuggled in huge amounts and payoff systems became standard practice for many government transactions.¹⁴⁰

However, despite the loss of Magsaysay, the chaos brought about by the Great Depression, World War II and Reconstruction that had wreaked havoc on Philippine society was truly now a thing of the past. The independent Philippine nation had become a showcase of democracy and economic growth for the region, although admittedly a less than perfect one. Even as the import-substituting industrialization program lost steam in the late 50s, President Diosdado Macapagal entered into a liberalization program during the 1960s that spurred further Philippine economic growth in the subsequent decade.

The economic growth and political stability experienced by the country in the 1950s and 1960s extinguished the fire that fuelled the 1930s communist movement. Now numbering just in the hundreds, the HMB finally disbanded its army in 1958. The rest of the Communist Party's surviving officials would be captured in subsequent military maneuvers; Alejandrino would fall into government hands in 1960, while the last of the Lava brothers, Jesus Lava, would be captured in 1964.¹⁴¹ The radical labor and peasant movements that these leaders had midwived were been replaced by more moderate voices supported by the Catholic Church.

But the tragedy of the era was the death of the peasant-based political party. Beginning in the 1930s, Pedro Abad Santos' Popular Front party succeeded in mobilizing the peasantry of Central Luzon into an electoral force that succeeded in electing councilors and mayors in many

¹³⁹ Kimura, Masataka. "The Federation of Free Farmers and Its Significance in the History of the Philippine Peasant Movement." *Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 1, June 2006.

¹⁴⁰ Schirmer, Daniel and Shalom, Stephen Rosskamm. *The Philippines Reader: A History of Colonialism, Neocolonialism, Dictatorship and Resistance*. KEN Incorporated: Quezon City, 1987. (First edition, 1983), pp. 150-151.

¹⁴¹ Pomeroy, William. *The Philippines: Colonialism, Collaboration and Resistance!* International Publishers: New York, 1992, p. 200-201.

rural areas. In the 1940s, this electoral party had grown into the Democratic Alliance that generated landslide victories in province-wide voting in six congressional districts. Had the Democratic Alliance been allowed to contest future elections, it would have likely won gubernatorial control in at least two provinces of Central Luzon. These victories would have transformed the Democratic Alliance into a genuine political movement that could have eventually challenged elite dominance of Philippine elections, bringing much needed competition that would have at least forced the existing political class to govern with less self-interest.

However, the ejection of the DA congressmen in 1946 inadvertently caused the Huk rebellion that ironically destroyed all of the political gains that Abad Santos had begun two decades prior. For the rest of the period, the twin elite-based *Nacionalista* and Liberal Parties would maintain total dominance of the Philippine democratic processes, creating a faux two-party system that in reality maintained identical platforms and constantly traded candidates amongst themselves. Until today, no mass based political party, whether moderate or communist in ideology, has succeeded in duplicating the success of the Democratic Alliance. As such, today's labor and peasant unions remain stuck with only the ability to influence national policies externally, instead of from within the government.

Unfortunately, the agricultural and labor ills that were the prime causes of the 1930s communist movement and the 1950s *Huk* rebellion were never fully resolved. Political turmoil and economic catastrophes in the following decades would once again provide fodder for the rise of another communist party and a new people's army.