

*Bullets and Bolos: Fifteen Years in the Philippine Islands Fighting Insurgents with the Philippine Constabulary.* John R. White. St. Petersburg, FL: Hailer Publishing, 2007 (originally published New York: Century Company, 1928), 348 pages, \$29.99.

*Bullets and Bolos* is the story of one American's experience during fifteen years (1901-1916) as an officer of the Philippine Constabulary. John White's narrative is a fast paced, interesting and insightful read about how a former American soldier adapts to the challenge of leading foreign indigenous troops in combat. It almost reads like a novel, but is full of intelligent insights and wisdom regarding an important and complex aspect of counterinsurgency.

John White's story begins when he joins the Philippine Constabulary after his service with the U.S. volunteers during the Spanish American War. As that war evolves into the Philippine Insurrection, the army mustered the volunteers out. White elected to muster out in the Philippines and seek service with the growing U.S. civil service. He first worked as a civilian clerk for the army commissary, but then enlisted as an inspector in the new Philippine indigenous police force—the constabulary. White describes the highlights of his next fifteen years service commanding Filipino constables as they track and fight insurgents, bandits, and Muslim warriors through swamps, jungle, mountains, and even at sea. White quickly proved himself to be an exceptionally effective leader, and a string of promotions and more challenging assignments took him to the rank of constabulary colonel and district supervisor.

White's book is most interesting as he describes how he built cohesive and effective indigenous units under American leadership, but comprised of the very different Christian and Muslim Filipino cultures. White overcame the challenges of culture, language, and religion, and built small units that could track insurgents into their mountain and jungle sanctuaries and then beat them in close combat. The keys to his success included emphasizing common warrior virtues, trusting the basic honesty of his native troops, treating his subordinates and their cultures with both respect and empathy, and adapting army methods to the native soldier's culture. White led from the front, turned his working knowledge of Spanish into fluency, learned the rudiments the major common languages and dialects, and lived with his soldiers and the native population. He also understood, though he didn't approve of such cultural characteristics as slavery and polygamy, that cultural institutions were best changed in gradual stages over time.

*Bullets and Bolos* is an excellent narrative of White's time in the constabulary. However, it is not, and makes not attempt to be, a history of the army in the Philippines or of the Philippine Constabulary. Thus, it is best to read this book only after establishing a working knowledge of the larger history, and a basic understanding of Philippine history and geography. Without such knowledge, the richness of White's narrative may be somewhat diminished.

John White's *Bullets and Bolos* is an important work. It describes the process of building a successful indigenous counterinsurgency forces. More importantly, it describes how an American officer can train and inspire foreign troops despite barriers of

language, culture and religion. Any soldier who has, or might work with allied military forces, particularly those from under-developed countries, will find this book fascinating.