

## PIONEER IN COOPERATIVES

Tomas V. Confesor served so well his country both in times of peace and war that his people could live contentedly, honorably and democratically. In peace he was an economist, educator and statesman; in war he was a provincial executive and the fiery resistance hero.

Born in Cabatuan, Iloilo, on March 2, 1891, Confesor was one of the three sons of the couple, *Maestro* Julian Confesor and Prospera Valenzuela. Although at times he had to subsist solely on bananas and sweet potatoes because of poverty, he graduated with honors from the Iloilo high school in 1908.

After teaching for one year, Confesor left for the United States of America where he scrubbed floors, washed dishes and dusted window panes to support his studies in the University of California where he received the degree of bachelor of philosophy in economics in 1914.

Upon his return Confesor was appointed the school supervisor for the district of Jaro in Iloilo. In 1922 he was elected the representative of Iloilo's third district in the Philippine Legislature where he distinguished himself as the "Stormy Petrel of the House" because of his consistent crusade against corruption in the government. He was twice re-elected.

With his sponsorship Act 3425, popularly known as the Cooperatives Marketing Law, Confesor boosted the cooperative movement in the Philippines. As a result farmers all over the country began forming marketing and producer cooperative associations. Governor General Dwight F. Davis regarded him as an "economic wizard."

Governor General Theodore Roosevelt Jr. designated Confesor the first Filipino director of commerce in 1933, while President Manuel L. Quezon named him the head

of the National Cooperatives Administration. He organized credit associations and agricultural cooperatives which "liberated many farmers from loan sharks and unscrupulous traders."

In 1935 Confesor was elected as delegate from Iloilo to the Constitutional Convention that drafted the Constitution of the Philippines, and at the same time the assemblyman from the third district of Iloilo to the first National Assembly under the Commonwealth government. He won the governorship of Iloilo in 1937.

Confesor was serving his second gubernatorial term when the Japanese invaded the Philippines in 1941. He was offered a cabinet post in their puppet government, but he turned it down. Following his refusal to cooperate, the enemy repeatedly raided his Manila home. So he escaped on a sailboat to Iloilo.

Immediately Quezon named Confesor the wartime

governor of Free Panay and Romblon. He then organized the civil resistance movement and as its head went underground as he openly defied the entire might of the Japanese imperial forces. As a guerrilla leader he preferred to "suffer in honor than to enjoy life in ignominy."

For exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding service to his country during World War II, Confesor was decorated by President Sergio Osmeña with the Philippine Legion of Honor, degree of commander, in January 1945 in Leyte.

Following the liberation of the Philippines that year (1945), Confesor was appointed the secretary of the interior in the reconstituted Commonwealth government by Osmeña. The following year he was elected to the Senate but died of heart attack on June 6, 1951, without completing his six-year term. — *Abstracted from Manila Times.*