

# UNCLE AMBO'S TRIP FIZZLES OUT

YESTERDAY, Uncle Ambo tried to depart for Egypt where he wanted to spend his Yuletide season and meet President Nasser. He had planned to confer with General Burns of the United Nations Peace Force and to visit the Anglo-French soldiers somewhere in the Suez Canal zone after which he wanted to proceed to Israel and visit President Ben-Gurion. But the globe-trotting did not pan out.

Not that he had any financial difficulty. Uncle Ambo has money to spend. That made us believe he would reach his destination. He is old, though. Sweet 60, never been touched by a house-wife's *bakya*, but slightly wrinkled. In short, he is a bachelor. It took him only three weeks to complete his preparation

vileges of the writ of *habeas corpus* or to effect his perpetual release without bail.

Since the announcement of his projected trip, he had increased his fees for all these things. He had to because, according to him, his journey would entail heavy expenses. My uncle had been very tight with his money since the idea of travel seized him. He decided not to repair the roof of his house (which, he says, "leaks only when it rains...") and salt away his cash.

Equally discernible was the fact that Uncle Ambo had practically abandoned the wearing of shoes. His six pairs of GI shoes which he bought during the liberation are still as new as his three old socks.

● by ADELINO B. SITOY ●

for his ambitious journey. It was just a fortnight and a week ago when he triumphantly announced to all the people of our barrio his plan to spend Christmas in Egypt. At first, we laughed off his proposed trip. Nobody believed him; everybody thought he was crazy. But we later realized that my uncle was serious; he was truly preparing for a journey that, judging from his preparations, would last for seven years.

Uncle Ambo is the *tambalan* of our barrio. He is known to possess such extraordinary power as to see the spirits and the *engkantos*, to be able to talk with them, too, and to cure a person from whatever sickness he suffers. Hence, all the barrio folk paid homage to his healing power and to his diplomatic connections with the invisible beings. And every time a person was bedridden, it was my uncle who was called to give treatment; whenever a fellow in the barrio was lost, that is, kidnapped by the *engkantos*, it was Uncle Ambo again who would be requested to make the necessary representations with the high invisible authorities to extend to the person kidnapped the pri-

He only wears one sock at a time because he says a pair should be worn only by those who have crooked feet. As a matter of fact, my uncle often wears a shoe on one leg and a sandal on the other. He is quite a card.

In the past weeks, my uncle was the earliest man in church and the last to leave it. Never before was he seen to be so fervently religious as when he was preparing for his travels.

When he was finally set to sail for the town where he was to board a bus for Manila, the barrio folk turned out *en masse* to see him off. They brought all kinds of gifts, especially foodstuffs. There were native cakes, *bibingkas*, *putong-tingkahoy*, *bobod*, cooked camotes, roasted bananas, *binignit*, *tilaob*, *inang*, *bukhayo*, *biko*, *maruya*, *siyakoy*, and others. The presents made Uncle Ambo happy. His sailboat was weighted down by the token of affection given by the ruralites.

When Uncle Ambo weighed anchor, there was a flurry of waving and jostling. From his sailboat, Uncle waved so strongly, so strongly — his boat capsized! ‡

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the unwritten sermon that he preaches outside the confines of a church. One feels good in his presence because he radiates his own goodness.

As I watched him listening intently, patiently to the one hundred and one requests and appeals of his shabby, poor christians, he did not fend... he did not attempt to put across a bargain... he did not shoot them away through their petitions or demands required a Foundation to do the blueprints. The elders wanted a concrete church for 3000 members of his flock. They were willing to contribute free labor... collect the necessary wood and accumulate sand and gravel... they must have a permanent House of Worship... please, would **Bapak**

## Three Heroes!

**Uskup** help them? The "intellectuals" of the village needed more schools for their children... most of the kids were forced to trek miles and miles of rough, primitive country to avail themselves of an education, would **Bapak Uskup** please, help them? There is sickness and death — people, especially the older ones were coughing... malaria and dysentery are taking tolls; they were too poor to afford the medicines sold at the *rumah sakit* (hospital) far away... would **Bapak Uskup** please pity them and give them some? Politics to them is still a remote subject. Their only desire is to live contentedly, following their great tribal customs and traditions, conforming to the teachings of Christ. Monsignor remained miraculously unfruffled throughout the seemingly endless interviews and earnest overtures... That baffled me. Children of all sizes and age squatted, noisily at his feet — looking at him with unspeakable idolatry that would have felled anybody but the Monsignor. No museum piece in an art gallery — not even at the Louvre — was ever that nakedly, minutely sized up and scrutinized as His Excellency and his gold cross. I was nonplussed but amused. The picture was interesting study. His Excellency, I'm sure, had made mental notes of all their need — he knows