

"THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH"

By F. B. FABROS

Capt. Inf. (RES)

WHAT the Philippine Republic is geographically and politically within the contagion of any likely war of world scope, is widely the accepted notion that greatly influence our insular defense mindedness. Because the possibility of an involving war has not yet dimmed from our current horizon and its threat is as real a thing as Communism, our position leaves us no choice but to grow a defense establishment. And this we have been doing out of what the Republic inherited in military apertenance from the late Commonwealth of the Philippines.

Our army reserve system found life in 1936 under the National Defense Act approved December 21, 1935. It is predicated on the concept of an adequately figured and trained civilian reserve to rally around and back up a small compatible regular force that is the composite of all arms and services. It is not a perfect ideal but it is the next best thing in defense permitted by our financial circumstance in the absence of and in our inability to run continually an expensive regular force of a preponderance and containing effectiveness that may allow us enough of the invaluable time we need meanwhile that we organize, arm and stage new divisions to score the telling decision in an active hostility.

The resumption and continuing maintenance of our regular and reserve forces to the relative standard, in size and capability, that we would like to see them from year to year is not without a great strain to our national coffers. Closely as it can be figured out from past fiscal budgets, 23 to 26¢ for every peso of tax collected is paid to defense annually. Still, with all these troubles and sufferance that we forego, we can't boast of any claim to even only what may be considered a poor approach to impregnability. This, perhaps, gives those who would rather champion a state of neutrality for any form of defense spending their one and biggest argument.

But then, be it that we can't get close to attaining such a warding perfection, impregnability is only a relative conception upon the certain state of which even those who believe they possess it can't be so sure they have it. Where it was one time thought possible of achievement, it now becomes a mere phantom of the great military bastions before 1941. Where it was one time a prized gift of defense many a nation may feel secure at the like of having it, this thing of yesterday has run out of all its quality of any practical containment that no country now, not even the United States of America, can claim to a possession of this prized estate and rest comforted by it. All at once the life and meaning of impregnability is subconsciously projected into the mind of even the most isolationist of states as a thing possible of attainment only on the concept of a global inter-defense scheme among nations where each country in a group has to share a task and do its utmost for the common group defense to counter the aggressive manifestation of another group. No doubt, the Philippines is with the Democracies. This gives us a vital responsibility we owe to ourselves and the entire group that well serves as the unassailable reason and native will to our continuing defense payments where the thought of self-impregnability we cannot own should not be a precursor of

the rebellious influence of doubtfulness and indecision in our efforts at preparedness.

There are those of us who grew a feeling for an ideal state of neutrality similar or close to a counterpart of Switzerland. It is argued that in this wise, besides avoiding the awesome and ugly consequences of belligerence, the Republic can save every centavo from all items of defense in our yearly budget to be diverted to more vital and productive channels of activity. This is a haven to a losing optimist which sadly cannot be encouraged because of the willful dictate of the order of our age when totalitarian motif renders all hope for a state of neutrality untenable. Switzerland has the fortune of being the exception to this world order by mere accident of convenience not entirely her own but as profitably shared by powers at war: She is, in an all-embracing hostility, the anciently established gaming table where warring states may deal their cards in all sorts of diplomatic negotiations, intrigues, and propaganda that they could not otherwise project but thru neutral quarters. By any other reason, that enviable mountain of peace is as open to the hungry jaw of hostile design. Remote as it is for the Philippines to be another Switzerland without disowning our Occidental upbringings and native sympathy for things democratic and catholic, it is now more so remote with the promise of Clark Field and Olongapo to any power apathetic to any form of Americanism in our side of this globe.

These two adversions the reverse panels of which others are prone to utilize as the arguments against are the very solid reasons for the undeviating wisdom of the resumption and improvement of the Commonwealth blueprint of defense by the Republic. The presentation of these points, however, is not so much to justify that which already exist and is being undertaken as it is to find the advice for the need of ferretting out our growing want for a ready capacity to stage a general mobilization. This brings us straight to the tract of the subject matter of this article.

The Extensive Implication of Mobilization. — From an active nucleus provided by our small regular standing army to the actual transformation of our defense forces out of our civilian reserves into divisions and task groups of battle effectiveness in the face of actual armed campaigns, the institution of a general mobilization of our man and material is the draw bridge between. Mobilization then becomes a national concern we have growing out of our civilian army pattern of defense. Simply said, it is the established channel of procurement of our man power and material and the delivery of these items by our civil institution to the Army. It is, in fact, a process the undertaking of which can only be had successfully with the military, the civil institutions, the industry, the agrarian economy, all public utilities, the skills and professions, etc., working as a solid team in a national feat of defense in the face of a war crisis. For the nation to turn incompetent and fail to mobilize in time its reserves, bring this incoherent mass of living beings to behavior and fighting shape, and predispose it to proper battle inertia ready to offer a telling resistance to the aggression, is to fail miserably

altogether in putting up any defense.

To mobilization planners, it is an affair of inexhaustive study and planning where rest the success or failure of the entire reserve structure of the land. It is two-way involved: It comprehends not only the actual warring assets of the nation; a great deal of study in its formulation is diverted to the potential—the mere foreseeable which can only be drawn down into a circumspect chart for the exclusive reserve of the military with the keen foresight of an expert business counselor predicting a market. Between the actual and potential, mobilization will be a well powered delivery machine serving the end of the military if it were to rely more on the former and but to a minor extent, or not at all, on the latter. Sad to say, however, the Republic can today make no boast but to count on neglected actual assets and far from properly assayed potential for a mobilization exigency that may crop up, say six months or one year or even more from now. (Formosa may not bring us this exigency, but we may at least be warned by it to mend our fence).

For a mobilization plan to be worthy of reliance, it must, perforce, obtain a capacity of attaining direction, liquidity, energy for maximum effective operation, and completion within the shortest prescribed schedule. Over and above all consideration, it must be well-advised about the nation's actual potential mobilizing assets, and practical and thorough in an exceptional degree in the manner materials are fitted in their highest rate of availability and usefulness into its scheme. Because its practical operation to a stage as an active primer of our defense organization rumage deeply into the province of civil concern, its basic structure need to rise to a level of understanding in both the army and civilian circles to the extent they are respectively involved without detriment to measures of military security.

For the purpose of a less trying survey, it may do us well to delete our mobilization perspective into its less involved aspect—and begin asking ourselves a few number of native questions. This will prune our picture into the small confine of a layman's seeing glass but is nevertheless the vital portion of the view that, failing to see it rightly and make for proper adjustment in time, will make the entire process of mobilization, nay the whole defense structure, a useless shamble.

Mobilization As a Civil Function. — Mobilization is a civil function serving the end of the military. The army has for its mission the defense of the state, but it becomes the duty of the civil branch of our government to provide the military with the means in man and materials without which it cannot achieve its mission. For this matter, we have only to recognize the important role that our civil government, especially the city, provincial, and municipal government, have in our set-up of defense.

The duties of the city, provincial and municipal officials begin with the registration of our man-power every year and when the reservists have been gathered and delivered to the army on mobilization day. In between these inclusive occasions, and after a reservist has been deactivated from training or army camp and assigned to the available roster of the reserve force, these local officials keep address of this reservist by registering him, contacting him from time to time, and informing the result of these check-ups to the nearest army authority for the latter to be always posted of the correct and up-to-date information about him for the benefit of both ends. The success or failure of procuring and invoicing the reservists for and to the army in the event of a mobilization largely depend on the thoroughness with which our local civil authorities have maintained contact with each and all of them from the time they are placed in the available roster of our army reserve.

This vital role that our civil branch has to undertake in the interest of mobilization presents a picture that only too obviously call for the need of gearing all officials concerned to their mobilization duties. To this late day, however, any impartial bystander can dare to question how extended the defense authority have projected liaisons with and for the executive branch of the government to circularize and make definitely aware all civil officials of their respective role in this mobilization as civil function, and check up how much are these civil officials complying with any and all these circulars and directives. This performance appears a mere small matter, properly attended; but it is a task of great and irreparable consequence, neglected.

Man Power Availability. — It is the census observation that the Republic can make available for mobilization from 250,000 to 300,000 strongms from out of the combined personnel availability of the remnant of our pre-war reserve force, the deactivated recognized guerrilla troops, the ROTC and six-to-eleven months graduated trainees, entirely freed from the AFP and PC standing active strengths, the CDDs and other units, as well as from volunteered services which can further bring this combined strengths to an increase of from 25 to 50 thousands, well timed and properly recruited. Theoretically, therefore, the Philippines can call promptly to service 350,000 troops, more or less, enough to personnel 16 divisions of full strength, battle tested and trained and with but a very minor interspersation of recruits, if ever.

But this figure is only good as a figure to premise upon not too solidly. Granting that we have every need of mobilization solved but this problem of available man-power, there is still the salient consideration that will do us well to look into: Our reserve force, while it may have, or has in the making, a super table of organization, yet it has not pieced and fitted into this table this idle asset in man. While the remnant from the pre-war reserve force, the graduated ROTC, and graduated six-to-eleven months trainees whose combined strength may not rise above one-third the entire availables, have been or are fast being fitted in and assigned to units of our reserve force contained in the as yet problematical table of organization, there seems to be no conceivable move to break down, reorganize, and assign to units the deactivated recognized guerrillas of the land. If there ever is one, it has the unpardonable sluggishness of the indecision of one who doubt the wisdom of the action.

This bring to questions the aptness of Executive Order No. 70 of the 1947 series declaring "*civilian volunteers who were members of duly recognized guerrilla units as having the equivalent training of those who have completed trainee instruction and as constituting a part of the Reserve Units.*" Perhaps the whole thing does not allow of any practical implementation without casting a serious effect on the discipline, morale, and training standard of the whole reserve body. Where its implementation is as it is being carried out by the army now, it looks like a great part of these recognized guerrillas will have to be left behind from available rosters and remain idle in case of another war. It may also be perhaps the military authority have not only arrived at the best and most feasible way of working out the implementation of this executive order. But whichever is the true case, it becomes the duty of our defense authority to work out and advert, if it need inventing, to the Executive or to Congress, a suggestion believed more practical and feasible than how far it can go at conserving and making the best use of members of recognized guerrilla units under the purposes and authority of Executive Order No. 70. These days of fast moving events, time is a luxury we may pay for dearly sooner or later. Neither can a defense allow for haphazardness. Where a need for the whole and effective service of these guerrillas

is anticipated under the strong and unassailable reasons, provisions and anticipatory steps for their wise, orderly and just use must be provided.

Too, there was more than good reason for the late President Manuel Roxas to have taken counsel on the early continuation of the draft and military training program for our youths where it was left in 1941. Actuations of the present administration also point clearly that it has every intention of continuing and improving upon the same endeavor. But, as a whole, the tempo of training and effort to build up more pockets of reserves has not been given nor is it being given the emphasis commensurable with our present-day increasing need for a bigger and strong reserve. So much so, that, failing to have provided for this a year or two ago as would have amounted to the small and little noted drain of an installment plan, a budgetary request to step up training now to its pre-war level will turn prohibitive, considering our national resources, in accumulation, a wringing item that allows for no sacrifice of a single peso in its imperative, and a head-line problem in its desperate abruptness.

Nor, as yet, has the government made a catalogue survey of the availability of the various professions, specialists, and the technical and skilled hands of the country to be fitted into and given a role in a one-movement order in case a mobilization demand. These social elements constitute a definitely vital strata of our man-power; and, unless they are regimented the earlier with the whole, given a place and definite assignment in the plan of defense, they cannot be in the processing line on mobilization day.

Our country has a tangible figure to envisage upon its ability to raise a good number of divisions and other task groups within a year or so from now. But the aggregate of all our compounding neglects and deficiencies in readying this strength for a short notice mobilization call has so reduced our competence that we can hardly attain a thing but confusion if an early remedy is not meted present situation. And it will not be without an unforgivable disorder and embarrassment on our part if we face a war crisis with all the arms, munition and equipment that the US may to a generous measure assist us only to realize at a sad and late hour our degenerate incompetence to mobilize our man-power at the very propitious moment. This sorry mess will not be of any good but the initial and disastrous failure of any defense effort we may spring out in the unexpected emergence of a war.

Material Availability.—Material, in its full military sense, is too embracing a term. It at once bring to meaning all that the army has on invoice from sewing needles to B-29. It is the baggage, provision, munition, and fuel of the army. Even as material is the first and last vital need of the army, so is it the concern of mobilization in the sense that the capacity to requisition for the man-power of the land increases or decreases in proportion to the

quantity and continuing availability of this essential.

Perhaps, beside the US-PI Military Assistance Agreement which count as a major factor in facing the material need of our defense, mobilization have less concern to know about the resources of the army toward this respect—that is, if there is really anything to keep confidential about. Housing, clothing and subsistence which are not part and within the meaning of the military assistance agreement, and, therefore, are entirely left to the immediate resources of the country, could perhaps be met the Jay style should instant mobilization catch up with us without ample time given the authority to prepare, or no effort reached at to make these things in immediate readiness. But this step should be taken only as the last and exceptional resort rather than the outlined rule to follow.

Much can be said about material and still not said lengthily. It is so eminently expendable and is the continuing need of any military operation from mobilization to demobilization that it intimately more become a native concern of the army rather than of mobilization, *per se*. If it shares an essay in here, it is only in the understood sense that one calling a mobilization must have provided for the supply of this want otherwise the reserve force requisitioned to active status will be of no means and use at all.

In passing, a thing or two need be said about the US-PI Military Assistance Agreement. It is for the PI to project an early move with the US for the timely implementation of this assistance agreement had between them to the least extent that the latter may release and invoice to the entire disposition of the former the arm equipments, the munitions, and the care and maintenance needs of these arms and munitions, of at least 200,000 containing troops of the combined arms and services for one year at any one time, as well as make ready and available on short date requisition the like arms facilities of a reinforcing strength of 200,000 to 300,000, for the duration of an actual operation necessity as may occur. To attain this is having made a well-earned job that can best assure our chances to spring a timely move against any hostile encroachment of our shores.

Public Utilities in the Service of Mobilization.—If we stage a mobilization, the reservists have to be located from their individual isolation in the civil life of 20 millions, collected from near and far away points all over the country, and moved until they are finally delivered to the military for mustering in and disposition. The traffic will be of such a magnitude that its chart will have the pattern of a giant spider web flung across the land and water of the Philippines. Its *stop-and-go* signal will direct conveyances from the two centavo mailing stamp to the biggest coast-wise sailing vessel of Philippine license, and its mode of fare will be in the form of reservist transportation slips or government travel orders, moving all at once in all sea lanes and highways of the country.

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