

- Confesor's patriotism was of the kind which defied the nation's enemy fearlessly and openly.

THE HEROIC RECORD OF TOMAS CONFESOR

The days when the Japanese soldiers' dragnet was closing in on Governor Tomas Confesor and he was about to be captured alive, his separation from his wife and the capture by the enemy forces of his niece, were the darkest in his life. He was like Jesus Christ agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane. The enemy did not only put a price on his head, but when he defied Dr. Fermin Caram, occupation governor of Iloilo, by writing that he would not surrender to the enemy as long as he could stand on his feet, the enemy swore to get him "dead or alive."

Fortunato Padilla, Iloilo provincial board member whom former President Macapagal had appointed as judge of the court of first instance of Leyte del Sur, said that one who did not draw spiritual sustenance as Confesor did would have succumbed easily to the enemy. Padilla should know. He was with Confesor all the time in the mountain hideout of the civil resistance government of Free Panay and Romblon.

According to Padilla, Confesor was still too weak after having recovered from a severe illness when the Japanese, under Captain Watanabe, known in Panay as "Patyando" or murderer for having plunged the island into a bloodbath in which more than 10,000 civilians, mostly old men, women and helpless children were killed, stepped up the liquidation campaign beginning July of 1943.

Padilla said that he was with Confesor in barrio Igtuble, Tubungan, Iloilo, when the Japanese, in a four-pronged attack, penetrated their mountain hideout. Confesor had retreated and moved his hideout to the barrio from Bucari in Leon, Iloilo, since the Japanese had succeeded in piercing the Bucari hideout. After ten days, the Japanese succeeded in closing in on the five evacuation huts used by Confesor in Igtuble, and the Japanese, mistaking Lt. Blanco, a signal officer of the 63rd battalion, for Confesor, took him alive to the lowlands. Blanco looked like Confesor, and this mistake enabled Confesor to escape.

Upon reaching the lowland and realizing their mistake, the Japanese tortured Blanco to death.

Confesor, taking another path from that of his wife and Padilla, succeeded in reaching barrio Santiago in Pandan, Antique, by criss-crossing deep ravines and stiff cliffs. Confesor sustained himself during this time by eating corn. Mrs. Confesor, accompanied by Padilla and Vicente Elefan, reached barrio Lag-it in Valderrama, Antique, while Confesor's niece, Teresa, daughter of former Rep. Patricio V. Confesor and now wife of Cabatuan Mayor Francisco Tobias, was captured by the Japanese along with Leticia Lorin, Mansueta Patrimonio and one Juanita. The Japanese took the women prisoners to San Jose, Antique. Teresa was sick of pneumonia at the time of her capture.

It was not until December of 1943 that Confesor was united with his wife in Bato Puti, Ma-asin, Iloilo. Here, Confesor learned for the first time of the fate that had befallen his niece. But Confesor and his wife were to be separated again when the Japanese raided the civil resistance government printing press under Provincial Treasurer

Juan Griño in barrio Quipot, Janiuay, Iloilo, in the vicinity of Bato Puti.

Writing about this chapter of his life in "Via Crusis," Confesor said that while he was not afraid to die, he was tormented by the fact that his niece, Teresa, got captured by the Japanese and he did not know what her fate was. Confesor said that this dispersion of members of his family and of those whom he loved, was more than he could bear.

In another letter smuggled by submarine to President Osmeña in Washington D.C., after the death of President Quezon, Confesor said he was in the fight to the bitter end because he believed that the United States was fighting for the righteous cause of democracy and that for him to give himself up to the enemy for a life of ease and comfort, was to betray the Filipino people.

Confesor told President Osmeña that the Japanese almost got him alive and that he had been sick all the time. But Confesor said that he wanted President Osmeña to return to the Philippines and the Commonwealth government with Osmeña.

Confesor said: "Long before the war broke out, I have searched my conscience for the purpose of discovering where my duty lies should this country become involved in the maelstrom of this colossal world chaos. The quest was soon ended and ever since the storm broke loose with all its fury upon us, the way has all been clear as crystal to me. It lies on the rough and rugged road of the Calvary of resistance but it is the way of honor and victory." — *By Loreto Angayen, Manila Bulletin.*