

Taruc's Narrow Escape

THE INSIDE STORY OF THE SAN ROQUE INCIDENT WHEN HUK SUPREMO LUIS M. TARUC NARROWLY ESCAPED DEATH OR CAPTURE.

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Staff Member

FIFTH IN A SERIES OF THE "SKULL COMMANDOS"



LUIS M. TARUC

On a dank dark day in March, 1947, the tacit defiance of law, the reign of terror and bloodshed of Taruc in Central Luzon came near to an end. Three days before, reports had reached the Commandos' headquarters at Arayat, Pampanga, informing Col. Napoleon Valeriano that Taruc himself was bivouacked at barrio San Roque in San Luis Pampanga, Taruc's hometown. With the Huk Supremo were the men comprising Squadron 5 under the command of "BUNDALION", the famed Squadron 21 of "CABALLERO", and an unidentified Huk unit.

Without delay two commando groups under Lts. Constantino Cruz and Rizalino Del Prado were dispatched to San Roque. Accompanying the "Nenitas" as guide was Bonifacio Bondoc, ex-Huk commander, who was better known as "LAPU-LAPU". Bondoc was captured at Malolos and was at the time with the commandos.

Both Nenita groups left San Luis on foot shortly after dark on the second day. The strategy as mapped out by the commandos to be employed at San Roque was for one group under Lt. Cruz to form a line along the edge of the barrio, while Lt. Del Prado's group was to make a circuit and come up on the Huks from the rear. This



A "Nenita" group advances toward its objective, commando style, in the "Operations Arayat".

would be accomplished by using Bondoc as a ruse and sending him up ahead with the advance scouts. The only danger of failure in the undertaking lay in the fact that if Bondoc should give the commandos away, the latter would fall an easy prey to the foe which outnumbered them ten to one.

About 7:00 p.m., the commandos reached barrio San Juan Pambilo. Both groups were still together, and Lt. Cruz who was the senior officer, decided not to lose time. He ordered the party to proceed to the objective. They had not gone half a kilometer farther when Bondoc, who was scouting ahead, spied two men in civilian clothes. In the moonlight, he made out the carbines in their hands. Signalling the commandos to halt, he approached the two men cau-

tiously. Bondoc came up to within six meters of the men when they let him have it. A bullet struck him through his right cheek and came out his left jaw.

Almost simultaneously the Nenitas returned the fire. An intense exchange of volleys ensued and lasted for about thirty minutes until the Huks finally withdrew. A brief reconnoiter by some commandos revealed 14 dead dissidents among the tall "talahib" grasses.

Lt. Cruz, sensing that he had contacted Taruc's rear guard, hastened in pursuit. Again, barely 500 yards away while crossing a small creek, the Nenitas were once more ambushed. A yell was heard from behind. The Huks had flanked the commandos. They turned and there was another yell. Then a deadly fire poured in from two sides,

and for a moment all was confusion and panic. Lt. Cruz dashed forward and calling his men to rally, broke through the enemy cordon in feverish haste. Finding a deep bank in the creek's bed, he ordered his men to seek cover and sit still. It was obvious that Taruc was well protected. So Cruz took shelter and decided to wait for daylight.

Meanwhile, Huk firing continued. Bullets whined above the commandos' heads. Taking count of his men, Lt. Cruz noted another casualty with a bullet hole on his right arm. The Huks were giving it to them and it is not surprising that the commandos experienced dreadful fright during those few hours. Sgt. Efrén Bugia actually went down on his knees, ready to meet the end and prayed. Another commando, S/Sgt. Jose Caringal had his helmet dent-

Operations Palomar — On the strength of intelligence reports that the district of Palomar in Tondo is a nest of dissident elements the Manila Police at three o'clock in the morning Sunday cordoned the place and launched a veritable "zona." Altogether a total of 68 suspects were rounded up by the police, two were held by them for illegal possession of firearms and the rest were turned over to the Philippine Constabulary G-2 for further investigation. The two held by the police were Genaro Ramos, 36, of 1020 Narcisa Rizal street, and Ernesto Estrella, 22, of 821 Asuncion extension. From Ramos an unlicensed carbine was seized and a Japanese rifle from Estrella.

The cordoning of the district and the screening of all residents were made on the strength of reports gathered by Capt. Ambrocio Lorenzo who is in charge of the MPD intelligence section that the Huks had planned to rise up in arms sometime before or after the elections. Although no top Huks were taken, "Operations Palomar" proved to all and sundry that the police could cope with any situation that may arise.

Murray Case — The trial of Mrs. Ester del Rosario Murray who is accused of parricide for the death of her husband, George C. Murray, was scheduled to begin Tuesday at the Quezon City court of-first instance. Mrs. Murray has for her counsel a battery of lawyers including ex-Justice Mariano H. de Joya and Atty. Amado Yatco.

On the prosecution side Asst. Prov. Fiscal Irineo V. Bernardo will appear, possibly assisted by legal experts from the PC and the NBI.

"Gloomy Sunday" — Whoever wins the Philippine presidency will not enjoy a holiday with the present precarious financial position of the Philippines. With a current annual expenditures of P250,000,000, low income and a de-



ficit already reaching to P109,000,000, the difficult situation is further aggravated by the release of P30,000,000 for guerrilla currency redemption and the approval by the President of P2,000,000 corresponding to two months' bonus deductible from backpay certificates.

PC-AFP Vendetta — Two Philippine Army soldiers were killed and five PC men were injured more or less seriously, one of them a captain when members of the two units clashed in Bamban, Tarlac, last Friday afternoon. Killed were Pfc. Alfredo Guimba and Pfc. Juanito Jardeleza, both of the 3rd Heavy Mortar Co., AFP, while those suffering from grenade shrapnel injuries were Capt. Felipe Bruan, commanding officer of the 102nd PC company, Sgt. Alfonso Mabor and three privates.

Two witnesses declared that the two were drunk and they picked a quarrel with

TARUC'S NARROW . . .

(Continued from page 5)

their objective was Taruc and Taruc was somewhere there. The dissidents would not fight so stubbornly if their Supremo was not among them in that barrio.

The barrio became a fort. Port holes were cut from the nipa sidings of the houses and rifle slugs sent from them with gaining rapidity. During the battle, shouts encouraged the Huk barrio garrison. Women's voices singing martial airs gave the scene a touch of a melodrama.

Soon the commandos got

two PC soldiers whom they manhandled. It was when the matter was reported to the PC that Capt. Bruan came with three soldiers and a non-com officer. He was trying to effect the surrender of the two privates when one of them hurled a hand grenade at them which exploded. The two were afterwards riddled with PC bullets.

Check Forgery — A clerk in the department of finance has been suspended by Sec. Pio Pedrosa in connection with a US Veterans Administration check in the amount of P9,309 which has been collected by impostors. The check belonged to Ruben G. Tiburcio of Barranka, Marikina, Rizal, who came to the offices of the USVA to claim the check. It was only then when the forgery was discovered.

"Collusion" — As Speaker Eugenio Perez expressed his fear of a Nacionalista inspired threat to peace and order,

within close range and they began using their flame throwers and hand grenades. This precipitated the climax and the desperados made a rush for the back way with the intention of effecting an escape. A hand to hand combat ensued. The Huks fought their way out of the barrio, leaving behind a few casualties.

Taruc narrowly escaped the commandos' clutches again. Part of his fleeing group was sighted by the Nunitas. But the Huk supreme seemed to bear a charmed existence. A hundred bullets were speeded towards him

President Elpidio Quirino charged the Avelino Party and the Nacionalista Party with "collusion," stating that the two partisan groups are conniving to reduce the majority party into a minority by excluding Quirino election inspectors from the chairmanship of the board.

Realizing that the Quirinistas are placed at a disadvantage as a result of the Supreme Court ruling granting the Avelino group an inspector, Perez proposes to file a motion for reconsideration seeking the withdrawal of such inspector. He recommends that instead of an election inspector of the Avelino wing, an inspector belonging to the commission on election be appointed.

and not one found its mark. He escaped without a scratch, hotly pursued, but never caught. Taruc was apparently sure of his safety. He had a ready exit in case of a tight pinch and he had wisely provided ample warning and protection around his camp. Had it not been for the fact that the commandos were delayed by three ambushes along the way, Taruc would have been easily trapped.

Strange as it may seem, this running fight lasted three days, with scarcely a stop for food or water for the commandos. Upon returning to the battalion headquarters in Arayat, Lt. Cruz and his men were summoned to Manila and individually commended for their courage and bravery by Gen. Mariano N. Castañeda himself.

(Next week we shall bring you the intriguing story of the capture and release of Huk Commanders LIWAYWAY and ILANG, said to be the most beautiful women in the whole Hukbalahap organization. Don't fail to get a copy of next week's issue of the NATIONAL WEEKLY, and read all about the inside story of these Huk Amazons. —Ed.).

ed by a Huk bullet while squatting. The Nenitas were waiting for the onslaught of the Huks and were ready to die fighting. In a case like this, Lt. Cruz planned a decided stand with his men forming a crowded circle in the creek. A rude embankment had been thrown up around them. But the Huk attack did not come that night.

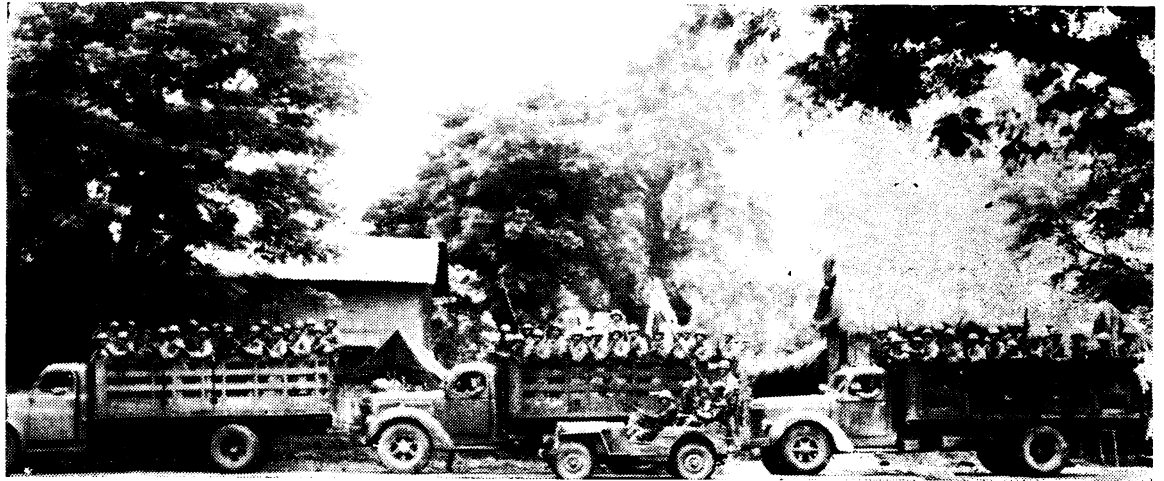
By dawn, the enemy firing had ceased. Lt. Cruz decided to work his way to San Roque by the swamps and "talahib" fields. He was sure that all trails were closely watched by the Huks. This detour took a whole day and the commandos did not get a single bite of food since their supper prior to leaving San Luis. To quench their thirst, the commandos wet their faces and mouths in carabao mud holes and sucked raw snails they picked up in creeks.

At about noon of the third day, the commandos approached barrio San Roque. The barrio was surrounded by open rice fields with a radius of approximately 500 yards. Everything seemed quiet in the village. The Nenitas were fatigued by this time, but Lt. Cruz did not want to waste a single minute. While Lt. Del Prado proceeded to make his way to the flank, a line was formed by Lt. Cruz and an advance made.

Just as the commandos emerged from the "talahib" infested area into the rice fields, the Huks from the barrio opened fire. It was as though the commandos were expected and the Huks had prepared a reception of fire for them.

The fight raged furiously. It was a question of annihilation for one side or the other, and both Huk and Commando fought like demons. Lt. Cruz shouted to the commandos to disperse and rush into the barrio. It was every man for himself but their advances were repulsed. Lt. Cruz kept driving his men forward, remembering that

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From base camp in Arayat, Pampanga, commandos entruck for a mission.

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