



THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

(Continued)

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CHAPTER 22

THE CHURCH DURING THE BRITISH INVASION

The Family Compact, signed on 5 August 1761 by the Spanish, Italian and French Bourbons, upset the harmony that had existed for years between Spain and England. In January of the next year, war broke out between them. But before notice of the outbreak of hostilities reached Manila, a squadron of three English ships, commanded by Admiral Samuel Cornish and carrying 3 or 4 thousand fighting troops on board, entered Manila Bay.

Archbishop Manuel Antonio Rojo was interim governor of Manila, a person hardly capable of facing the difficult problems which the presence of the English squadron was going to occasion the city. Hence, it is understandable why during the blockade, there was scarcely any unit of command, and everywhere there was consternation. The fort was ill prepared to face the invader. As a contemporary document says, "... to conquer it, [the English] did not need to employ the military tactics for a difficult encounter, nor risk their lives in bloody combat, nor swing the sword against an enemy equally strong; for they came knowing that the walls had been built to defend the city only against the assaults of the Chinese, and that there was no military commander, no trained army, nor were there more arms than what sufficed to terrify [people] by their boom, and there was no defense..."¹

¹ Anónimo, Respuesta conveniente al papel titulado "Justa satisfacción de los jefes británicos a las quejas de los españoles de Manila," MSS in AUST, "Becerras," tomo 44, Documento 3, fol. 1v.

During the siege, the religious orders and the secular clergy cooperated in various ways to defend Manila. In the first place, acts of reparation were performed in the churches and many more confessions were heard. The convents were places of refuge for many fugitives and the troops which the missionaries had raised in the provinces to defend the capital. Likewise, the religious orders undertook to distribute food to the troops from the provinces, to the needy, and to provide meat and rice for the royal warehouse, for which they brought to Manila as much rice and meat as they could from their haciendas.

Some religious, like the Augustinians and the Dominicans, headed the auxiliary troops which they had recruited from the provinces for the defense of the part of the city fronting the sea. Others took hold of the shovel and the hoe to dig trenches and raise parapets. Some volunteered to man the canons, and most, more in keeping with their priestly character, gave moral support and cheer to the soldiers. In some sallies, the religious went out as leaders of the native fighters. In the defense of the foundry, the professor of mathematics in the Colegio de San José, distinguished himself by retrieving his artillery in time, with the support of the religious and thanks to the courage of the natives.

On 5 October, the English succeeded in entering the city, thanks partly to the treachery of the Swiss Fallet,² and partly to the negligence and apathy of the Spanish defenders. Manila then went through 40 hours of horror, usual on similar occasions: robberies, assassinations, rape. The conventos and churches were not exempt from pillaging by the soldiers.

Let us describe an example of what happened during the assault and sack of the convento and church of Santo Domingo. Some fathers were saying mass when the British soldiers appeared before the doors of the church demanding admission. Once inside, they killed two people, robbed the sacred vessels, broke the tabernacle door to take the ciboria, broke the glass that covered the miraculous image of our Lady of the Rosary, taking the crowns of the statues of the mother and of the son, after decapitating the former. After this, they went to the high altar where there was an image of Saint Dominic, denuding it of its vesture. They also grabbed the chalices from the hands

² Respuesta conveniente etc., fol. 2v.

of some priests who at the moment were celebrating mass. Entering the sacristy, they took as many ornaments and sacred vessels they found there, breaking locks and pulling out shelves and drawers. From here, they passed to the convent where they completed the sack, leaving behind almost only the bare walls.²

The San Francisco convent was saved from the general pillage through an ingenious trick of the then guardian and, later, bishop of Nueva Cáceres, Fray Antonio Luna. To save the valuables of the community and the money and precious objects deposited there by many residents of the city, he offered a banquet in honor of the British officials in the lower cloister, thus making them believe that he acknowledge vassallage to the British king. This won for him during the occupation of the city the applause and the support of the residents. But after the war, the same people who had praised him, accused him before the governor of turning traitor to the country, forcing him to take refuge in the mountains of Baler to avoid worse evils.³

The nunneries (beaterios) did not suffer the soldiers' ruthlessness, thanks to an order of General William Draper who posted guards at their doors. Santa Clara, in particular, received through Fray Luna's mediation, permission for the nuns to transfer to Santa Ana, where they stayed until the end of the war, suffering no inconveniences. Besides, the conquerors declared the area neutral territory for their sake.⁴ But the colleges, especially Santa Rosa, were not saved from the ravages of the assault. During this time, while the college was still under the administration of Mother Paula, an extraordinary event took place. A British soldier wanted to violate a student. When she resisted, he pulled out his sword to kill her. But the weapon miraculously twisted itself when he brandished it, so that the terrified Englishman threw it away and fled. The sword was still being kept in the College of Santa Rosa in 1941.⁵

² Huy, Juan, O.P., *Relatio de perditione Manilae die 5 mensis octobris, anno 1762, in quo gubernabat dominus Emmanuel Antonius de Roxo et Vieyra, archiepiscopus Novae Segoriae [sic]*, MSS, APSR, Sección "HCF," 1762.

³ Gomez Platero, Eusebio, O.F.M., *Catálogo Biográfico de los religiosos franciscanos, Manila, 1880, pag. 495.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Fonseca, Joaquin, O.P., *Historia de los PP. Dominicos en las Islas Filipinas, y en sus misiones de Japon, China, Tung-kin y Formosa, Vol. V, pags. 495.*

But it was with the Spanish ladies — widows, married women, unmarried girls — that the British soldiery satisfied their frivolity. In this way many of the former atoned for the scandals they had occasioned by their immodest dress. The mestizas and the native Filipino girls, with some exceptions, behaved as their sex and religion demanded.⁷

Despite this, we must admit for the sake of truth, that once the capitulations were signed, by which the English promised to respect lives and property and promised to allow the free exercise of the Catholic religion, the English general forbade the continued commission of these excesses, and, for this reason, even ordered the execution of some Englishmen, Chinese and Sepoys.

With regards to the religious living in Manila, the British made them take an oath of fidelity to the British crown, and did not permit them to leave the city limits without a passport, which they granted only with difficulty. They also wanted to oblige them to force the natives in the provinces to renounce their oath of allegiance to the Spanish crown and transfer their loyalty to Britain. But they failed.

In virtue of the terms of surrender,⁸ the Church, as her contribution to the war, had to give a huge sum of money in order

⁷ Here is a description of an incident from a contemporary document: "... and, as proof of the loyalty of the others, I shall cite what happened to an india or Spanish mestiza, very pretty, who was educated in the college of Santa Isabel. Admiral Cornish fell in love with her, went to visit her, made his proposition, offering her besides a dowry of 16,000 pesos. She replied, 'If your Excellency is reconciled with the Church and gives proof of your conversion, and I am sure you are unmarried, I shall consent to your request.' He answered, he would give it thought; but, in any case, she should come out and go home with him. To which she said, 'What is said, sir, I said. My faith comes first and I place my Christianity above all the riches of the world.' He tried many times and with exquisite care, but all in vain. He finally went away while she stayed. Greatly held in honor, a respected Spanish gentleman of some means took her for his wife." MSS, APSR, "HCF," tomo 1, fol. 93v.

⁸ Carta del Provincial de dominicos al Maestro General, Llanahermosa (Bataan), mayo 2 de 1763, MSS, APSR, Sección "Documentos de Provinciales," tomo 1, documento 21, fols. 11v-15.

⁹ "Not having agreed on the terms of the capitulation with the British officers on the day of the assault, they forced the Spaniards to sign others the next day, in which they obliged them to surrender the port of Cavite, all the Islands, and the sum of 4 million, two million to be paid immediately and the other two afterwards, but with the threat and timely condition of putting them all to the knife, if they did not fulfill these terms." Respuesta conveniente, fols. 3v-4.

to reach (an impossibility) the amount of P4 million demanded by the British conqueror. In order to do this, the administrators of the *obras pias* of the Miter, of the *Mesa de Misericordia* and of the Third Orders, took from their funds the sum of P357,369. But since this did not suffice, the enemy took the wrought silver in the churches, which, when melted and weighed, was worth P71,000.

On the other hand, before the fall of the city, the government had sent to the provinces the public funds which amounted to hundreds of thousands and which the conqueror could not get, thanks to the ingenuity and the efforts of the Franciscan fathers. The same fathers strove to put away in safety the subsidy which the galleon *El Filipino* had brought from Mexico, depositing it in Dupax, Nueva Vizcaya. Because of this money, Anda was able to maintain a resistance government outside Manila. Ill luck befell the galleon *Santisima Trinidad* which, after departure from Acapulco, had to turn away from port, forced after a pitched battle, to surrender to the English. The latter got hold of a capital sum of around P2 million.

As is known, the Chinese who did not enjoy the Spanish government's friendship at this time, sided with the British, not precisely for love of them, but doubtless, out of hatred for the Spanish government which had decreed their expulsion years before. The churches were not free of this antipathy. Once in the streets, the Chinese robbed, sacked, desecrated and made some of the churches dumping places for filth and a spot for their abominations, not even sparing the Blessed Sacrament, as happened in the Quiapo church. Here they threw down in disrespect the sacred species.¹⁰

It is known that the British, in their efforts to force their dominion over the provinces surrounding Manila mainly in order to obtain food supplies which the city lacked because of Anda's blockade, caused notable damage to the convents and parishes, especially in the provinces of Tondo, Bulacan, Laguna and Cavite. There were few churches not destroyed by the invaders or by the government troops, or by townspeople themselves on

¹⁰ Informe del Provincial de dominicos al Rey, escrito hacia enero de 1763, Manila, MSS, APSR, HCF, tomo 1, doc. 4, pp. 41v, 42.

orders of Anda, so that, on occupation, the enemy might not transform them into fortresses.

On 4 October, Don Simon de Anda y Salazar left Manila to organize resistance in the provinces. The bishops, several Spaniards, the Franciscans and, especially, the Augustinians of Bulacan and Pampanga, immediately acknowledged him as governor and captain-general, despite the order of His Grace, Archbishop Manuel Antonio Rojo, who, on the fall of Manila on 5 October, had commanded the Spaniards in the provinces to accept the British government. The Dominicans in Bataan and Pangasinan followed the example of the Augustinians. In general, all the religious sided with Anda, promising him obedience, supplying him with resources and urging the people to fight for Spain, raising troops and appeasing the discontented.¹¹

The religious orders had to pay a great price for opposing the invaders and supporting the flag of the mother country. The Augustinians, leaders in this attitude, suffered the sack of their convent of San Pablo twice, and eleven of their members were taken as prisoners to London by Draper. The Dominicans lost two coadjutor brothers assassinated by outlaws in their haciendas in Pandi (Bulacan) and Santa Cruz de Malabon (Cavite). The Recollect lay brother, Fray Agustin de San Antonio, died a hero's death in the defense of the convento and church of Bulacan.¹² The Jesuit fathers had to bear the loss of their beautiful house of Maysilo located in the present site of Caloocan City; the Dominicans lost their houses in Navotas and San Juan del Monte;¹³ and the Augustinians, their convento and church in Bulacan. When the British, during a military foray against the town, occupied the church and convento badly defended by a

¹¹ Memorial de los Procuradores de dominicos, franciscanos, y recoletos al Gobernador, 4 de julio de 1764. MSS, APSR, HCF, Tomo 1, fol. 89.

¹² Zúñiga, Joaquin Martinez de, Estadismo de las Islas Filipinas, Madrid, 1897, pp. 331, 337-338.

¹³ " . . . we have suffered [the loss] of the church and house of San Juan del Monte, which the enemy completely reduced to ashes, the fire having consumed the miraculous sacred image of Our Savior, which was venerated there and was the object of devotion of the whole region . . . They apprehended the Vicar of that convent and took him to Manila, although they left him free the next day to go to the convent of Santo Domingo there." (Carta del Provincial de dominicos al Maestro General, Samal, 16 de julio de 1763. MSS, APSR, "Documentos de Provinciales," tomo 1, doc. 21, fol. 26v.)

combine of Filipinos and Spaniards, a religious joined them, who died, when the convento was taken, from a rifle shot fired by the British commanding officer, or at the hands of an infuriated Chinese mob, according to others.¹⁴

But the religious felt not so much these losses as the calumnies which some Spaniards spread about them during the war. Seeing that the people killed some of the latter who were in Manila, while the religious were respected and left untouched, they had no qualms in saying that the religious were in connivance with the enemy.¹⁵ Anda's later attitude, forgetful of the support receive from them, increased their suffering during the later years, occasioned by a memorial against them presented to the king in 1768 and the matter of diocesan visitation and royal patronage.

In July 1763, an English man-of-war had already docked at the port of Manila bringing news of the signing of the peace on 10 February of this year. It was stipulated that Manila was to return to the Spaniards; but this was not effected at once because the British resolutely refused to acknowledge Anda as the legitimate governor, pretending besides that the vanquished had not yet paid the P4 million. Much later, in April 1764, after Archbishop Rojo had already died, the frigate *Santa Rosa* arrived with definite orders from England and Spain to hand over Manila to the Spaniards. On board ship came the new governor, Don Francisco de la Torre. Feigning sickness or really falling sick on entering the city of Manila, he paved the way to Anda's triumphal entry into the city at the head of 2,000 people, well supplied with arms and equipment, amid the acclamations of the multitude.¹⁶

¹⁴ Zuñiga, *Op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 149-451.

¹⁵ Gonzalez, Card. Ceferino, O.P., *Historia de la Provincia del Santisimo Rosario, Años 1738-1825*, MSS, APSR, Sección "Historia-Provincia," tomo 11, fols. 48-49.

¹⁶ Gonzalez, *Op. cit.*, fol. 46v.