

## The Fence Sitter's Hour of Decision

By SIMON MAKALINAW

**T**HIS IS WRITTEN DURING A lull after three of the most exciting weeks we have experienced in our neighbourhood since the outbreak of the present war. The excitement in question is none other than the brilliant victory achieved by the Imperial Japanese Forces over the American marauders who attacked Japan's inner defenses on the pretext of liberating the Philippines. Almost 200 American warcraft of all categories were put out of commission, more than 60 of them sunk; not to mention the hundreds of aircraft and almost 20,000 Americans listed among the casualties. The American losses may double by the time we go to press.

But we are not allowing the recent Japanese victories to turn our heads. We are in no holiday mood. On the contrary we are in a bellicose frame of mind. We are apt to be rough with some people. Even if we step on their toes, we will not be stopping to apologise.

We are far from believing that the recent military engagements off Taiwan and the Philippines were an indication that the end of the war is in sight. We think they were but preludes suggestive of the magnitude of the battles yet to come. In other words, although history may pass better judgement, from where we are today, we do not think that, in spite of the grand scale of the air

and naval engagements that took place near our shores, they can be considered as having been the decisive battles of the present war. That is why we feel we cannot afford to be in a festive mood.

Nevertheless, we do think that, for many Filipinos, the great victory won by the Imperial Japanese Forces in the last few weeks should bear a special significance. It gives many of us a very good opportunity in which to take stock of ourselves and to make up our minds, once and for all, as to exactly where we stand as individuals, and as Filipinos, and as Asians.

We would like to help them make up their minds, and in doing so we bring before them two very important factors. One is the military angle. We believe it is about time for them to properly evaluate the ability of the Japanese military leaders to conduct successful campaigns, whether on land, on sea, or in the air, against any opposition and whatever the odds. It is time, also to properly evaluate the constantly repeated words of the Japanese people that they are prepared to carry on the war, no matter how prolonged, until victory is finally theirs. The leaders at the helm of the Japanese Empire knew what they were doing when they decided to take up the challenge of the An-



glo-Americans for a showdown. Such a matter as the immense productive power of the enemy countries was never a military secret, as far as the Japanese were concerned. All that had been figured in their close calculation. If the trouble is taken to study the long history of the Japanese people it will be found that they are no amateurs in the art of warfare. We should give serious thought to this point and thereby renew our faith in the strong chances Japan has, of coming out on top when the smoke of the Greater East Asia War eventually clears.

The second factor we would like to mention is perhaps more important than the first in so far as it applies to the Filipino people because they are supposed to be aspiring for independence. We mean the cardinal necessity of any people desiring to command respect, to possess something solid in the way of character. They must have confidence in themselves as well as the will to fight for their convictions. And the recent Japanese victory should have served to hammer some character into them.

Nothing of any consequence is achieved or won by merely wishing for it or talking about it. It is not enough to be able to anticipate all the questions and to know all the answers. One does not acquire dignity by simply appearing worldly wise. An individual is respected by either what he really is or what he can really do, besides talk. The same thing applies to a nation of people. The outward appearance of anything is not necessarily a criterion of its intrinsic worth. *There is little dignity for a people in forever existing as colonial subjects, no matter how intelligent they may be.* The recent Japanese victories should fire the enthusiasm of the Filipino people to strengthen the courage of their conviction that they shall never allow themselves to be dominated by alien

powers.

An irrefutable saying goes, that time and tide waits for no man. But the trouble is, the perennial fence-sitters, those who are neither fish nor fowl, evidently do not realize the truth of the saying. In their fancied imagination they picture to themselves the easy, independence is not worth preserving. In their fancied imagination they picture to themselves the easy independence they think they might have had if the Greater East Asia War did not come until 1946. But that is like King Canute trying to hold back the waves. Or to speak in colloquial terms, it is like in a baseball game to ask for a fourth strike because the championship happens to be at stake. Such infantile thinkers presumably expect the whole world to suspend its activities until the Philippines got its American independence, which is a dubious enough supposition considering the fact that the United States had hemmed and lawed and kept putting it off for forty years with the alibi that the Filipino people were incapable of self-government. It is our opinion that the recent military operations that transpired in and near the Philippines should serve to make such idle dreamers snap out of their dream of a make-believe world and catapult them into the world of bold reality.

We would like to speak plainly to that recalcitrant group still sitting smugly on the fence, and we speak in behalf of those comprising the opposite group who have shown themselves as true Filipinos and endeavored to maintain a steadfast belief in the justice of our cause and have really contributed their mite in one way or another. We feel that we can no longer tolerate the continued vacillating attitude of the pseudo-Filipinos who have done nothing but contribute eloquent lip service and cleverly pretended to go through the



motions. We feel that we should waste no more of our time or sympathy. They have been coddled long enough. We feel that it would be better for all concerned if they were bundled up and tagged and shipped to Leyte now, to share the same destiny that is awaiting the Americans who have landed there. That would be disposing of the proverbial two birds with one stone. It would eliminate them from distracting those who are seriously trying to do honest work, and at the same time provide the discontented with their long awaited opportunity to join their American comrades who have just arrived.

The pseudo-Filipinos should realize that their hour of decision has

also arrived. Three years have passed since the outbreak of the war; three years in which to grow up and to mature. And three years in an age such as we are living corresponds to thirty years of any other age. So to the fence-sitters we say it is high time for serious thinking. But if they cannot make up their minds or cannot reconcile themselves into an active, constructive participation in the history making event that is the Greater East Asia War, we will leave them to their thoughts with a parting reminder. In the words of Oswald Spengler, that great German philosopher, if they cannot make their own decision, history is certain to decide their fate for them.



### Foe Supply Line Menaced—

*The Japanese air force is daily pounding the rear supply bases of the enemy in the Pacific.*

*The main supply bases for the American units engaged in heavy hostilities with the Japanese on Leyte are Sydney and Melbourne, Australia respectively about 3,500 and 4,000 miles distant from the island in straight lines. Actually, transports carrying war supplies are assumed to pass the Admiralty islands and also Hollandia, New Guinea or Saipan in the Marianas group on the way to Leyte Gulf.*

*It is understood that each American troop needs 16 tons of ammunition, arms and provisions a month. The Americans on the Leyte front will thus use roughly 1,500,000 tons of war supplies a month, as it is estimated that the seven divisions in Leyte each comprise around 15,000 men.*

*American large-sized transports at present entering ports in the regions of Tacloban and Dulag range from 4,000 to 6,000 tonners in gross weight.*

*Even if the enemy employs large-sized vessels only, he will have to allot more than 300 craft for the purpose. A daily average of at least 30 ships carrying war materials should enter the ports of Leyte which are under his command to maintain a constant supply.*

*These ships will generally take from 18 to 20 days to reach Leyte from Sydney, a voyage that in peacetime required from 12 to 13 days.*