

News Highlights

Local

TO A GOOD MANY CITIZENS of the Philippine Republic, the most significant piece of news in November was the creation of a new control organisation to take charge of the procurement and distribution of rice. The new control body was named the Rice and Corn Administration, or RICOA. The RICOA supersedes the old Bigasang Bayan. It differs from the BIBA in probably one important aspect: the Japanese are aiding the RICOA administration. The BIBA replaced the NARIC which was jointly administered by Filipinos and Japanese officials. The NARIC was dissolved shortly after Philippine independence was proclaimed. The BIBA was then organised, managed by Filipino personnel. Well-informed quarters claim that the old wartime NARIC was successful as a control organisation because it had the backing of the Japanese Military Administration. Withdrawal of that backing, plus such factors as irregular trading practice, weakened the enforcement activities of that control body.

Complete and absolute control of the procurement and distribution of rice and corn and their by-products was in mid-November given by President Laurel to the RICOA. The RICOA is headed by Minister of Economic Affairs Pedro Sabido.

The Ordinance which created the RICOA states that it will have control and supervision over procure-

ment and distribution, price-fixing, apportionment of the share of the farmers, proprietors and mill operators, control of rice mills, and authority to search for hoarded staple products.

The RICOA is expected to solve the people's most serious problem by stabilising the price of the main cereal and bucking up its policies with sufficient force. Harvest got under way in the rice-producing areas of the Philippines late in October, and was in full swing in mid-November.

The RICOA is expected to procure the bulk of the purchasable rice supply in the Philippines, mill, store and distribute it to the people before the end of this year. As of the last week of November, old rice was quoted at P330 and new rice at P250 per ganta in Manila's black market. The price of the cereal in the rice-producing provinces is, on an average, 40% less.

In his capacity as Chief Delegate of the President and Inspector-General of the Martial Law, Minister Teofilo Sison, late in November, informed military governors that among the acts regarded as crimes against the Republic are the following: (1) spreading of false information about the Republic of the Philippines, (2) wilful obstruction of government activities, (3) sabotage, (4) harboring of enemy spies, (5) sheltering and protection of enemy troops, (6) giving of any form of aid, material

or otherwise, to the enemy, (7) communication with the enemy by any means, (8) listening to enemy broadcast.

American planes that raided Manila on November 13, resorted to what the *Tribune* indignantly termed "enemy terror bombing tactics." Residential sections of Manila were bombed and strafed. Hardest hit were

the districts of San Nicolas, Intramuros, Paco, Pandacan, Ermita and Sampaloc. Low-flying planes almost touched rooftops, scaring non-combatant Manilans. The Archbishop's palace received a direct hit. Irreplaceable documents housed in the archives of the palace were damaged. Upwards of 100 persons were believed killed and many civilians injured.

War in the Pacific

WAR DEVELOPMENTS in November proved Japan's clear-cut victories in China, in Pacific waters, and on Leyte. In China, Japanese forces finally closed in on the elaborate air fortress of Kweilin, the main base of the 14th U. S. Air Force in China. The fall of Kweilin had been expected for weeks. Major-General Chennault and his men had in fact blown up three first-class airfields that millions of coolies and millions of American dollars built in before evacuating it some weeks before it actually fell into Japanese hands. The Japanese knifed their way from three directions and got the walled city of Kweilin and the 31st army of Chungking that tried futilely to hold it. The fall of Kweilin means that Japan has finally added one important link to the chain that connects Japanese-occupied areas from Manchoukuo through North China, down to Indo China and Sycnan. It also means that the 14th U. S. Airforce has been considerably weakened and will have to conduct its raids on Japan and Japanese shipping and supply lines from air bases located farther in China's southwest. Tall mountain ranges separate the Japanese armies from beleaguered Chungking, seat of Chiang Kai-shek's government. Last November, there was talk of moving the threatened capital to some other place. Chiang Kai-shek's government late in No-

vember suffered a shake-up brought about by American pressure. The Minister of War, Ho Ying Chin, was replaced by General Chen Cheng; while H. H. Kung, Minister of Finance, was replaced by his assistant, O. K. Yui.

On Leyte, the U. S. 24th Division was last month reported encircled, so that part of the 32nd division had to be sent from Carigara to Culasian point to reenforce the badly battered enemy troops in the sector west of Carigara. Intensified Japanese bombardment dealt death-blows on the Americans, on both the reenforcements and the trapped Americans, whose supply lines have practically been cut off. The Japanese have been conducting daring attacks right within enemy lines, causing considerable damage to the Americans. The enemy was able to land a few reenforcements in Abuyog, which moved west to Baybay. The progress of the fighting on Leyte indicates that the Americans are slowing down their so-called offensive owing to stiff resistance. The Americans landed on October 20 counting on an initial strength of 3 divisions which, up to late last month, was increased to 5.

Japanese air attacks on the supply line of the Americans has limited the landing of reenforcements on Leyte. American troops are thus confronted with the old problem of