

SALUTE *To Returning* HEROES



By Dr. ISIDORO PANLASIGUI

I AM happy to have this opportunity to speak to you. I am sure that the whole armed forces of the Philippines, the people of the Philippines, especially your folks and sweethearts are happy to welcome you home. I, too, wish to welcome you and I salute you for the adventures you had bravely gone through, the sufferings you had patiently endured, and the honors you had so valiantly achieved.

In welcoming you, I do not wish to speak of wars nor of prisons. War is so terrible even only to speak about it. We do not want to remember it, although I wish that the peoples of the whole world would talk about war in all its destructiveness and brutalities; remember it in its sufferings and miseries with the sole objective of doing it away as means of settling international problems and misunderstandings.

I do not want to speak of prisons and prisoners. But I want to remind you that prison walls are not for criminals only, but also for those who loved their country too well and held tenaciously their convictions and ideals. Political leaders, religious leaders and soldiers were put in prisons that glorify life and immortalize the soul. Rizal, Mabini, Quezon, Abad Santos, to mention a few, were put in prisons that limited the movements of their bodies but made their ideals fly and spread over the length and breadth of the country to give courage and comfort to

the Filipino people. You had been in prisons, but not in the prisons of the criminals but in the prisons of the heroes, heroes not only of the Filipino people, but also heroes of all the peoples of the world who love freedom and the democratic way of life.

I welcome you to our own country — heroes of a small but great and brave people, the Filipino people. You are now in your own country, which you love in the same manner as you love your mothers and sweethearts. I know your bodies are still here, but your minds and hearts are already in your home towns, in your homes among the members of your family, sweethearts and friends. Some of you were already met by members of your family. At home your folks and your friends, even the cats and the dogs, are preparing in the kitchens and in their hearts for your arrival, the returning heroes of the towns. The provincial and town officials are waiting for you. They are preparing a hero's welcome.

And I can almost guess the things you would do when you reach home. After the ritual of greetings among the members of the family and friends, and after inquiring about Pedro and Petra or Juan or Maria, your friends or sweethearts, if they were not there to meet you, then you look toward the kitchen. And you smell the appetizing lechon and adobo. But depending upon the place or prov-

ince, you also smell the pancit molo, gabi leaves with coconut, the lumpia with garlic, the puggug, or kilawen with papait, the buro, and the pacbet.

During the early American occupation the government sent many young Filipinos to the United States to study. It was then the purpose of the American officials to train these young people to love America and its democratic way of life to the end that we Filipinos should remain forever under the American flag. That plan dismally failed. When these pensionados saw the American life -- their material progress, their political ideals, their Christian life, they too wanted the Filipino people to be like Americans in their government, religion, education, and ideals. And they came with such spirit and ideal. They became the most vocal and sincere advocates for the "immediate, complete and absolute" independence of the Philippines. And as a result, we have our young Philippine Republic today.

You, too, went abroad. You saw other peoples from other countries. You, too, have learned the way of life of the Koreans in some small way, the way of life of others. I am confident that you, being young Filipinos, like the pensionados love your country too well to allow anyone to alienate your love for her. When Rizal was in Europe and heard that Leonor, his sweetheart, had finally married an English engineer, he told his sorrows to his friend Dr. Blumentritt. By way of soothing Rizal's wounded heart, Dr. Blumentritt wrote to him,⁽¹⁾

"I know how your heart aches, but you are among the heroes who conquer pains caused by wounds inflicted by women, because you seek higher goals. You have a brave heart and you love a more noble woman -- your country."

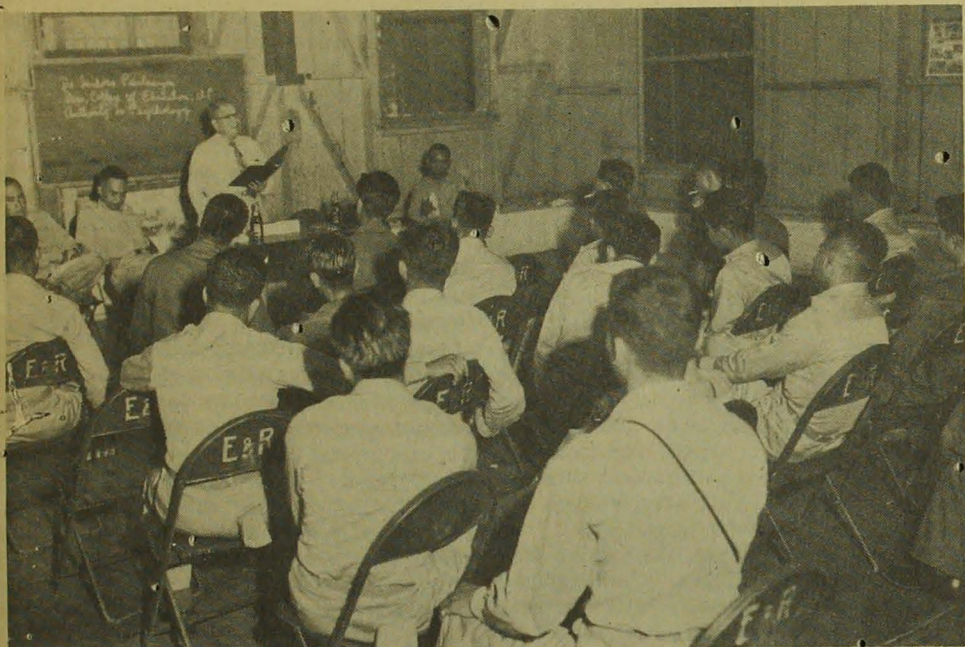
I am persuaded to believe that compared with the early and present pensionados, you have a greater love for your country and people, because you went abroad not to learn life in classrooms and libraries, but to fight for the way of life and ideals for which the Filipino people since Lapulapu consistently worked, fought and died. And I have a belief, yes, a deep feeling at this moment that

here, this morning, the spirits of our heroes, -- of Lapulapu, Tupás, Burgos, Rizal, Bonifacio, Mabini, Quezon, and all the Filipino leaders who had crossed the river of life -- are now hovering above happy in seeing you brave Filipino young men, the fulfillment of their dreams, and the guardians of their dreams fulfilled. Your fathers, our fathers, fought for the freedom of our country. Today we are celebrating the cry of Balintawak. The cry that started the fight for our freedom from Spain. You are happy in the enjoyment of that freedom. Now you gladly went to another land to help other people, the Koreans, to have the opportunity to live under the wings of freedom.

You were in Korea for several months or years. While you were there, you lived, moved and had your beings in a strange country, and among many different peoples. Because of this fact, I wish to call your attention to the following paragraphs:

1. You were the representatives of the Filipinos, a people who from the beginning of their history enjoy and love their freedom. This love for freedom was first manifest in the battle of Mactan where Lapulapu defeated the Spanish soldiers and killed Magellan. You know very well that from that time on our ancestors intermittently rebelled against the Spanish government in the Philippines. They were then weak and helpless. But as the years went by our ancestors became more and more determined to fight for our freedom. And this determination gathered momentum, and force until we finally succeeded to overthrow the Spanish government. For a brief moment we again lost that freedom for the Americans came. Our leaders fought, but soon they learned that guns and bullets could not get an independence, so they decided to get that independence peacefully by education and the democratic way of life for which our leaders fought from Lapulapu to Bonifacio and Aguinaldo, with the help of Rizal, Mabini, Quezon, Osmeña, Roxas and Quirino. These Filipino great men, bright stars in the firmament of the Filipino universe, led the Filipino people to the promised land, our own native land, the land of the brave, brave soldiers like you, and

(1) *Epistolain Rizalino, Vol. III, page 164*



The author addressing the newly-returned former prisoners of war at Fort Wm. McKinley. Dr. Panlasigui is Dean of the College of Education of the University of the Philippines and is an authority on psychology.

the land of the free, like all of us Filipinos. You went to Korea the true representatives of the Philippines and the Filipino people. We are happy to know that while you were there you lived and fought like a Filipino, the lovers of peace, liberty and freedom. We are proud to know that you have been true to Rizal's dream of freedom and to his faith in the Filipino youth when, as a young man, he sang:

"To the Filipino Youth
Hold high your faultless brow,
Filipino youth, on this day grand!
Shine forth resplendent now,
In gallant glory stand,
Handsome hope of my motherland."

I want you to know that there are many young Filipinos who admired and envied you because of your exceptional opportunity to represent our country and people in another land where each one of you had the opportunity to show to other peoples the stuff — physical strength, courage and bravery, and loyalty to an ideal — of which we Filipinos are made.

2. While you were in Korea you had the opportunity to meet men, like you, from different countries, who, also like you, represented their countries. In such a setting indeed, each one of you had the real opportunity to see different peoples of the world gathered together like many colors, light, shadows and objects to form a beautiful landscape. While there you had the opportunity to see peoples from the different parts of the world. To a certain extent, we could say that during your stay in Korea you visited many different countries of the world. What an opportunity you have had for a comparative study of the cultural life of these peoples! It is true that all of you were in military uniforms representing your own respective countries. But I am sure that you were glad your uniform is more elegant than those of the others. When you saw the Filipino flag, the sun and three stars, the red, white and blue, fluttering with the Korean breeze against the Korean blue sky, your hearts fluttered with joy, because you became aware that that beautiful flag represents the

brave Filipinos and the beautiful Philippines. And I am positive that you believe with all your hearts and souls that the Filipino flag is the most beautiful of all the flags that you have ever seen. My friends, if I were as young as you are I would like to go to Korea just to experience that noble ecstasy of seeing our flag, the most beautiful flag of all the flags of the world, flying proudly on the soil of Korea.

3. With your association with the young men from other countries you must have learned that they are just like you, different of course in color, features, languages, etc., but you are all the same in your objectives and ideals, in your fears and anger, loves and sorrows, and you discovered that after all you are all human beings who have

eyes... hands, organs, dimensions senses, affections, passions... fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same disease, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer...

laughed and tickled, bleed when hurt and die when shot and certainly all of you wanted to go back home! And you are now here at home!

4. While in Korea you had the opportunity to show that you came from the only Christian country in this part of the earth. Paradoxically enough you were there to kill for an ideal but the setting where you found misery, hunger, tears, destruction and death, you also have the chance to show your Christian ideals. I am sure you had removed fears from the hearts of many children, had given cheers to the widows and mothers who wept because their husbands and sons had paid the greatest price for the way of life for which you too had fought. For these things that undoubtedly you had done, the Koreans, the Americans, the Australians, the French, and the other nationalities who were with you in the battle line noticed your courage and bravery both in fighting and in helping those who needed your help and cheers. They thanked and admired you. We, too, are proud of you.

5. On the battle line, behind the battle

line, during firing and after firing, among the ruins and devastations, you have received a type of education which could not be obtained in a classroom even of the best equipped and most modern university of the world. In Korea, you had seen men brutally killing each others for the sake of their countries and their ideals. You had seen a man killed another man; but you had seen the same man helped and saved another from death. Certainly you had seen man in action in his extreme brutality and extreme kindness, in his hatred and affection. You were a part of this life and death drama. And out of this drama of man's conflicting passions, you have emerged better human beings ready to work and help for more kindness and affection and less brutality and hatred among the peoples of the world. Yes, you have learned in the actual setting the meanings of practically all human relationships that are taught in classrooms of colleges and universities.

You have learned to sleep under the Korean sky; to breathe the Korean air, perhaps with the aroma of Korean cookings; to drink Korean wine; to play with the Korean children; to dance and laugh with Korean young people; and certainly to smile, in Korean language, at Korean girls. And I am suspecting that some of you at this very moment can see in your mind the tantalizing smile of a Korean girl many miles away to the North. But don't be dismayed. I assure you that the Filipino girls can throw you more captivating and more tantalizing smiles, even more comforting.

When Captain Dua came to my office to invite me to speak to you this morning, I did not hesitate to accept the invitation, for I know too well that to be with you and to speak to you are a privilege and an honor. It is indeed an honor to be with returning heroes of the Philippines, even though one is not himself a hero. I congratulate you for the great opportunity you have had to achieve honors in the battle grounds, and I salute you for the soldier's honors you have so valiantly achieved.