

GENERAL MACARIO SAKAY: Was He A Bandit or a Patriot

By Major Norlito N. Alafritz, QM



ONE of the most tragic figures of Philippine military history was General Macario Sakay. Hanged as a bandit during the infant years of American occupation under the Ley de Bando-lerismo, Sakay died bravely on the scaffold but before the noose tightened around his neck, he defiantly thundered prophetic words on his sorrowing country's eventual freedom.

"Death comes to all of us sooner or later," he said. "But I want to tell you that we are not bandits and robbers, as the Americans have accused us, but members of the revolutionary force that defended our mother country, the Philippines! Farewell! Long live the Republic."

Is he a bandit or a patriot? It took half a century for history to unveil the aura of doubt that lingered

over the head of Sakay and to stamp him as one of our staunchest patriots during the dark days of the Revolution and Insurrection. Antonio K. Abad's richly documented book depicting Sakay's struggles as a revolutionary justifiably ranks him side by side with militant leaders like Bonifacio, Diego Silang and Antonio Luna.

Contrary to popular belief that General Malvar was the last insurrecto general to surrender, contemporary historians now give credence to the fact that it was General Macario Sakay. After General Aguinaldo's capture in Palanan by General Funston in 1901, Sakay continued the bitter struggle for five years undaunted by lack of arms and supplies. Grimly determined, he estab-

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lished his "Presidency of the Tagalog Archipelago" from which he issued manifestos, orders and decrees to govern the regions that came under his sway.

Sakay's defiance of American rule was ignored in Manila and by a rising group of young leaders who believed in American altruism towards the Philippines, he obstinately fought on, gaining adherents from the masses of simple country folks. Relentless guerrilla warfare held the American Army at bay. Time and again he clashed with the enemy bent to capture him dead or alive but he was as elusive as the colorful General Ricarte.

Realizing that the wily Sakay cannot be captured in combat, the American authorities commissioned Dr. Dominador Gomez, a well-known Filipino labor leader of the time, to negotiate for Sakay's peaceful surrender. Dr. Gomez reached Sakay's mountain stronghold and met the courageous guerrillero. The meeting was brief

but fruitful. Gomez succeeded in convincing Sakay of the utter futility of resistance and bloodshed. To Sakay's protestations that he and his men were fighting for his country's freedom, Gomez persuasively replied that he too was willing to take up arms and join Sakay if convinced that they can win—that the Philippines can win freedom without further armed struggle through peaceful cooperation with the Americans in establishing self-government. Gomez further argued that inauguration of the First Philippine Assembly will be held up unless he surrenders. Sakay was convinced and he immediately capitulated. The rest is history as we now know it. Sakay and his staff were made prisoners in Cavite during a party held in their honor. Then followed swiftly his memorable trial, futile protests of innocence of the charges against him and his officers, and his tragic end. Thus, did General Sakay die, an unsung hero, patriot and martyr.

About The Author

Major Norlito N. Alafiz, at present the chief of the QM Supply Section, AFPGD, is a veteran of the Bataan and survivor of the Death March and the Japanese concentration camp at O'Donnel, Capas, Tarlac. He was a member of Markings Guerrillas during the enemy occupation. A graduate of the QM School, Fort Lee, Virginia and of the Food Technology Institute at Chicago, Illinois, he served as Bn S-4 of the 20th BCT, PEFTOK and as Asst. Commandant of the QM School, PATC. For his exemplary services, he has been awarded many decorations, among them, the Military Merit Medal (equivalent), US Bronze Star in the course of the Korean Campaign 1951-52, and the Military Commendation Ribbon for service with the 1955 Baguio SEATO Conference.

