

Manila Five Years Ago

By A. V. H. HARTENDORP

THE internees whose homes were in Manila had for three years envisaged returning to them immediately after their liberation, stripped and looted though these homes might be. But now the great majority had no homes at all to return to, nor were there any houses or apartments they could rent, nor any hotels or lodging houses they could turn to. Never in their most apprehensive moments had they thought that Manila might be almost completely destroyed,—as it was. Manila had not simply suffered the ordinary destruction of war, of bombing, shelling, and fire. Large parts of the city had been deliberately and methodically demolished, and what Japanese demolition had begun, American artillery had to carry on. In many instances it was not even possible to tell where a certain building had stood. The manager of one of the Manila oil companies, in speaking of the rebuilding of his plant, stated that he would have to start at the beginning, with a land-survey.

Santo Tomas people who had been out of the Camp and had seen the devastated city could give no adequate description of it. No one could. One had to see it for oneself. Photographs could only suggest a scene of more than desolation. The most authentic representation, as for a moving-picture set, would appear overdone and remain unconvincing. What impressed one was not the ruins, but the completeness of the ravage, the utter hopelessness of any restoration. The effect was cumulative as one traveled mile after mile from one end of the city to the other. Noble buildings had been transformed into mere piles of rubble and debris. Over areas, miles square, hardly one stone was left on top of another. On the Escolta and in Dasmariñas Street, the rubble lay thirty feet deep.

It was as if all the forces of destruction had operated together, and that even this had been exceeded. There was not the clean, wind- and water-swept look which comes after the passing of a violent storm; there were no buildings only in part consumed, or gutted and still left standing, though blackened and scorched, as after a great conflagration; there were no merely cracked or toppled structures, as after a destructive earthquake; no great shower of ashes or flow of molten rock even in part concealed the havoc, as after a volcanic eruption. Manila was not merely in part destroyed, as cities near a battle-front, by enemy artillery and the bombing of military objectives from the air. Much less did Manila present the venerable ruins left in the wake of time.

The greater and most important part of the city was completely destroyed,—its piers, docks, bridges, power-gas-, and water-plants, telephone exchanges, radio-stations, and factories and warehouses; its scientific institutions, universities, museums, libraries, schools, churches, theaters, hotels, apartment houses; its private mansions and humble homes, and even its parks and botanical gardens, avenues

The first part of the material published here for the first time was written by the author immediately after he had ventured out of the Santo Tomas Camp, in the company of the late former Governor J. Ralston Hayden. The entire text, completed in 1946, is taken from the author's unpublished history of the Santo Tomas Camp and the Japanese occupation. There is no exaggeration, but one thing the author did not anticipate was the veritable miracles which engineers and construction men performed in rehabilitating some of the larger steel and concrete office buildings, the remains of which, it had seemed to the author, could only have to be pulled down. Some of these buildings, in fact, were, but quite a number of them were successfully restored. Others of the big buildings in Manila today were, of course, newly built. Large sections of Manila are, however, still a waste today, notably the Walled City.



and boulevards. Not only were the Bay- and river-fronts, and the industrial districts razed to the ground, but government centers, the business and shopping districts, the theatrical and amusement places, and the residence areas in every direction, except one, even the suburbs.

The city presented a scene of simean destruction for the sake of destruction, without other object, meaningless and wanton, though the American part in it had been necessary because the Japanese had fanatically refused to surrender and had to be blasted and burned out everywhere.** The aspect of the city was not fantastic so much as crazed. Noble towers and spires, overthrown; many-storied buildings, collapsed; quiet courtyards and inclosed gardens, burned-out and exposed, still seemed natural enough; but buckled pillars, columns twisted like worms, sagging architraves, tip-tilted pediments, walls drunkenly overhanging the streets, buildings bulging outward like balloons, seemingly defying the laws of gravitation; what remnants remained yawning with ragged holes, cracked, pitted, and pock-marked by artillery shots, burned and blasted, stained and befouled, presented a scene which could hardly be imagined even in delirium. This seemed demonic work. The wrecked semi-classical government buildings and the once jewel-like romanesque churches, converted into great heaps of brownish dust, with just enough left standing to enable one to recall what had been there, suggested not violence and power so much as the malicious destructiveness and obscenity of fiends.

There seemed nothing left even to mourn. Manila was gone. It remained only a name. But there was the question as to what represented the greater loss,—the destruction of modern Manila, the great new government and office buildings, hotels and apartment houses, piers and docks and factories,—these could be replaced; or Manila's ancient structures and shrines and historic landmarks, especially those of the old Walled City, with its convents and churches, its old Spanish houses with their overhanging second stories, its narrow and picturesque streets, its ancient fort and stronghold, and especially its ramparted, moated, and parapetted walls, its bastions and ravelins, its sculptured gates, one of the best-preserved of fortified cities, incorporating the gradual development of medieval military architecture from the simplest of corner and curtain-wall defenses to the most carefully studied bastions and outworks.

The once so beautiful city of Manila, old and new, presented an aspect of such total and terrible and devilish destruction as would in times past have caused men to abandon the place as accursed. It seemed impossible that any life could have survived in it, even had not the innocent blood of tens of thousands of victims of murder and massacre everywhere caked the dust. There was still the stench of death everywhere. It was impossible to recover the bodies of all the dead held in the debris. Most of the Filipino dead had been removed, but dead Japanese soldiers still lay about in the streets, like rats. They usually lay across the central line of the street. One could see how they had fallen, struck by the avenging bullets of the American soldiers, as they scurried across the street from one

*This design used in the publicity for Philippine Achievement Week depicts in outline the leaf of the *anahaw*, a tall palm (*Livistona rotundifolia*). The palm yields a valuable wood used for golf clubs; the leaves are used for thatching walls and roofs in some regions, and for making hats and fans; the fiber was formerly used for making bow-strings.

**Figures from Japanese sources later indicated that from 15,000 to 16,000 Japanese navy troops and 1,800 Japanese army troops had been left in Manila to make their final murderous and suicidal stand.

"strong point" to another in their insane suicide tactics. There they lay, looking incredibly small, like gnomes, with bloated bellies, their mouths open, their teeth grinning white in the sun, clouds of flies above them, execrable symbols of a conception which upholds the life of the state as of greater significance than the lives of citizens and which glorifies self-destruction. There is but a small and dizzy hiatus between the will to life and the will to death, between suicide and murder, between self-destruction and world-destruction. True self-sacrifice, true courage, true heroism do not lie in that direction; only hatred and despair and utter evil; the end is the ghastly vortex into which Manila and its population were drawn.

There were graves everywhere, bodies buried where they had fallen; mounds large and small, rudely marked with crossed sticks or entirely unmarked, in the yards of what had once been homes, or along the cracked sidewalks. For survivors to obtain death-certificates and burial permits or to arrange the barest of funerals was impossible. One young Russian woman in Ermita who had been forced to leave the body of her elderly mother in the garden where a shell-fragment had hit and instantly killed her, returning a few days later after the fighting had ceased in that area, and expecting a sight of horror, found only a neat mound of earth beside the place where the beloved body had lain. Some pitying soldiers, perhaps, had decently interred her.

The larger part of the residential areas of North Manila, in which Santo Tomas, Bilibid Prison, and Malacañan Palace are situated, had been saved by the timely arrival of the American forces, but this part of the city was not extensive enough to meet the residential requirements of the whole population. So the people in Santo Tomas for the most part stayed where they were. Only a few of the fortunate ones who had houses in North Manila had homes they could go back to. It was difficult even to get down town for a look around, for there were practically no transportation facilities for public use. About the only vehicles to be seen on the streets were army trucks and jeeps. . .

The American Chamber of Commerce opened an office near the Camp, at 348 España Street, on February 22. In the absence of C. Clifford, the secretary of the organization, who was interned at Los Baños, R. S. Hendry, editor of the Chamber *Journal*, organized the office with the approval of the directors who were in Santo Tomas,—Messrs. Gaches, Duckworth, Rockwell, Headington, and Gundelfinger. The office undertook to keep a register of the names and addresses of those who left the Camp and to assist in making contacts with their friends; it provided a public stenographer and bicycle messenger service; and it published occasional bulletins of information of general interest. That was about all any chamber of commerce could do for the time being. . .

There had been frequent warnings over the loud-speakers in the Camp that internees should take advantage of the transportation offered them inasmuch as this might not be available later, and while many were eager to go, many others were reluctant about going before they had an opportunity to straighten out their affairs, while still others did not want to go at all. Among the latter were many old-time residents and those with family ties in the country. A number of these, who were fortunate enough to have homes in Manila which had not been destroyed in the sack, had already left the Camp; others were still searching for houses or rooms to rent. Internees who had families in the provinces to whom they were eager to return were awaiting transportation. All of them were handicapped by lack of funds, even those whose credit was good, for no bank had as yet been allowed to open its doors. Many of those who had left the Camp were still drawing rations there. . .

A number of engineers among the internees got jobs with the Army or related services, and a few women were able to get employment as stenographers, but in general no opportunities for making a living opened. The Army engineer corps was doing magnificent work at the waterfront and in clearing the streets, and the water service had been in part restored, but it was said it would be months before electricity and gas would again be available. Filipino and Chinese ventures opened in the ruins of buildings in the down-town area,—little restaurants and stores and shoe- and tailor-shops, but important enterprises could not get under way. Not even had any of the important newspapers in Manila been able to resume publication, although a few small, two- and four-page sheets were sold on the streets in addition to the *Manila Free Philippines*, the publication of the Office of War Information. It was clear that everything, rightly enough, was being subordinated to the fighting of the war. Enemy losses in the Philippines had reached nearly a third of a million men. Iloilo and Cebu had been taken and the invasion of Mindanao had been begun, but there was still heavy fighting in many parts of Luzon, and the sound of bombing in the Mariquina Valley could still be heard in the Santo Tomas Camp.

Reluctantly, and in many cases sadly, therefore, the majority of internees decided to accept the "transportation offered", even if it meant the abandonment of everything they had left, and the possibility that they might not be able to return for a long time, if ever. Important or once important American and British business houses ordered all their personnel home except one or two key-men in each case who were to remain to look after their interests and do what they could. On April 10 came the big exodus,—2,146 from Santo Tomas and 1,150 from Muntinlupa. The Santo Tomas group included 480 Americans and 140 British who were still so weak or ill that they had to be sent on a hospital ship, 650 American and 416 other internees, and 460 other persons who had entered Santo Tomas as refugees after February 3. . .

THE people were impatient. They had imagined an immediate heaven after liberation. Everything would be set right again, without delay. Peace, order, prosperity, happiness would forthwith return. But alas, though the Philippines had happily been freed from the invader, America had for the time being done little more. Osmeña, after his second visit to the United States (he had left March 12), had returned to Manila on May 23 with a nine-man commission headed by Senator Tydings, chairman of the U. S. Rehabilitation Commission. The Tydings party stayed less than a week, leaving on May 29, after interviewing MacArthur and holding a number of interviews also with Philippine officials and members of Congress. McNutt, before his appointment as High Commissioner, arrived in Manila for the first time after the war on June 20, reportedly to survey health conditions and to study relief measures, "It's heart-breaking to see Manila today", he said. He left on the 31st. "I have the facts", he told the press, "but I am not sure I have all the answers". In Honolulu, speaking of conditions in the Philippines, he was quoted as saying, "It is not a happy situation. They need all the help we can give them".

The Army had freed the country from the Japanese, and that was the big thing, but the liberation of the Philippines was a long drawn-out process, and it had not ended the war. Japan itself was still to be defeated, and everything else perhaps had to be, and in fact was, subordinated to that. The general attitude of the High Command seemed to be well characterized by a remark of General Whitney, head of the Civil Affairs section, made to an executive of the American Red

*Los Baños Internment Camp was liberated on February 23.

Cross: "These people are so happy to be liberated from the Japs, that if we do nothing for the next six months, it will be all right."

Yet all the help to be given the country could at that time come only from the Army. The Red Cross and other relief organizations could get no cargo space and distributed only army goods,—what the Army felt like turning over. The Commonwealth Government, though formally restored, could exercise but little authority because of continuing Army control over large areas of territory and most public services. The Army occupied most of the large public and private buildings still serviceable in Manila and the larger towns, and the Government was handicapped by lack of office space as well as of the most necessary office furniture and supplies. The Government was also practically without funds.* Opportunity for self-help for the people was narrowly circumscribed. There was nothing to do anything with. The only people who were making any money were those who were catering to the soldiers,—restaurant, saloon, and cabaret owners, and the big distillers who were raking in a good part of the army pay-roll.

The first banking institution to open was the banking division of the Philippine National Treasury, on April 19, but it was not in a position to make large loans. The first private bank opened June 28,—a branch of the National City Bank of New York. The Philippine National Bank opened about a month later, July 23, on which day, five months after the liberation of Manila, three other private banks also at last opened their doors.

The Army had started immediately to clear the harbor and repair the piers, and on March 2 the first army supply ship entered Manila Harbor, but the first ship permitted to bring in civilian goods was the S.S. *Bering*, which did not dock until August 13, six months after the liberation of Manila. It brought around 8,000 tons of badly-needed supplies,—flour, milk and other canned goods, and textiles, some of which were distributed by the Government as relief and the rest sold through ordinary channels. The press reported that holders of bills of lading were offered from five to twenty times the invoice value of the goods. The second relief ship, the *Memphis*, did not arrive until about a month later. About the middle of September, however, Osmeña told the press that monthly shipments of around 30,000 tons had been assured from that time on until the end of the year. But conditions for unloading civilian cargo at the Manila piers remained all but impossible; as late as July, 1946, ships were often forced to lie at anchor for as long as six weeks before they could discharge.

With all the demands on the Government for immediate relief and rehabilitation and the requirements for its own reorganization, the financial resources were pitifully limited. In September, 1944, \$10,000,000 was transferred from the General Fund of the Commonwealth Government on deposit in the United States to the Public Fund in Manila. The amount of the deposit was \$10,000,000. In June, 1945, a transfer of \$20,000,000 was made, and in August another transfer of \$10,000,000. In addition to the General Fund, the Government had time deposits in the United States which had occurred from the coconut oil excise tax, amounting at the end of 1944 to \$32,000,000, but the U. S. Congress did not remove the restrictions on the use of this money until October, 1945, when it amounted to \$71,000,000. The Exchange Standard Fund could not be touched. The first public expenditures in the Philippines by the Commonwealth were made under authority of executive orders of President Osmeña. The Philippine Congress, during its first 30-day special session passed only a small appropriation bill, approved July 1, 1945, which provided for the continuation of the amount of September 1944 and provided for the operation of the government for only three months, from July 1 to September 30. An act appropriating around \$109,000,000 for the operation of the government from October 1 to June 30 (1946) was not approved until November 3, 1945. The inadequacy of these funds forced the most drastic economy. At the end of 1945, the special appropriations authorized reached over \$327,000,000, but of this amount, \$141,000,000 represented appropriations the release of which was subject to the availability of funds, and it was deemed necessary to certify only portions of these appropriations for release as needed up to June 30, 1946, the amount and a general report hereof may be covered by reference to the report collected from January 1 to June 30, 1946.

The total amount of internal revenue collected during 1945 was only \$9,325,923.00, of which \$1,000,000 was derived from excise taxes, \$2,703,161.50 from excise taxes on imported goods, and \$2,517,965.11 from license, business, and occupation taxes. The foreign trade (including that with America) during 1944 amounted to \$39,516,700, of which \$36,847,265 represented imports and \$471,184, exports.

For months after the liberation of Manila, little or nothing was done about civilian transportation needs. Not until the end of May did the Army place fifty trucks at the disposal of the Commonwealth Emergency Control Administration, assigned fifteen more to Meralco (Manila Electric Company), and fifty-six to various provincial transportation companies. Osmeña established the Metropolitan Transportation Service late in July, and by the end of that month the Army had turned over 700 trucks (also 700 bicycles) to the Government, but the means of transportation thus made available was still almost negligible in a country which had been stripped by the enemy of practically every means of transportation.

Many business firms which had at the outbreak of the war in 1941 turned over all their trucks to the USAFFE, readily and without question, found it impossible now to buy equipment from the Army, while tens of thousands of army vehicles were allowed to rust away in army dumps because there was some hitch in declaring these goods surplus.

While soldiers and sailors could always "thumb" a ride, army drivers were not allowed to "pick up" civilians. Manilans walked,—first in the dry season heat and dust and then in the wet season rain and mud. One could not save oneself a long walk by telephoning. Except for a small number assigned to government offices, telephones were all strictly "army".

The Philippines had had a fine inter-island shipping service consisting of around two hundred good-sized ships, but not until late in July did this service reopen to the extent of the sailing of one American President Line steamer from Manila to Iloilo. Not until August 24 was it announced that the U.S. Maritime Commission had approved the transfer of sixteen ships to the Philippine coastwise service under the direction of the War Shipping Administration.

Mail service for civilians remained practically non-existent. Letters from America were three months under way or failed to arrive at all. Even telegrams remained undelivered, but that was chiefly because there was no way of finding out what holes or corners most people lived. Generally only those who had friends in the Army who would send and receive and forward mail for them, got their letters through in reasonable time.

More than 200,000 people in Manila were homeless, but little or nothing was done to provide them with housing or even shelter. Except for those refugees from fire and massacre who, as already mentioned, were taken care of in Santo Tomas and later at San Carlos for some months,—and these were relatively few, the Army didn't do anything and the Commonwealth could do but little. In October, some one thousand families were still housed in a few refugee homes for war widows and orphans maintained by the Emergency Relief Office, but thousands more had moved into various public school buildings in North Manila, and had to be driven out when classes were opened. In some schools they were allowed to remain, this greatly complicating the management of the schools. The Army built large numbers of barracks and warehouses all over the country, but only for army personnel and army goods. The material was practically all imported. Building by the Commonwealth Government and by private individuals was impossible for lack of materials as well as funds.

What did people do? They roomed up with friends or even with strangers or built make-shift shelters of scraps of galvanized iron sheeting and lumber salvaged from the ruins. Even in July, 1946, a householder still had to pay 50 centavos a board foot for a low grade of lumber which formerly cost ₱35 per 1000 board feet; ₱7.50 for a 94-pound bag of cement which formerly cost ₱1; and ₱17 for a sheet of galvanized iron which cost ₱3.20 before the war. The No. 30 galvanized iron sheet which used to sell for 95 centavos still cost ₱12. Prices of native construc-

tion materials such as bamboo and nipa were so high that it cost from ₱2000 to ₱3000 to build a small hut. Under such conditions, of course, all building regulations were suspended; people built any kind of shack anywhere, even on what were once the finest streets.

The Army built and temporarily repaired the streets and highways it had to use, and did the most necessary temporary repair work on the buildings it occupied. Ordinary streets in all parts of Manila were still full of holes a foot or more deep and became impossible quagmires during the rainy season. Even the sidewalks, were they remained, were two inches deep in the oily slush washed up by the heavy army trucks which pounded along in endless streams with an ear-splitting racket, splashing mud in all directions.

Until October, coconut-oil smudge-lamps and candles remained the only illumination in Manila homes. Army buildings were at first lighted by means of small portable generators, powered by gasoline engines. In June, the destroyer *Wiseman*, and in August the destroyer *Whitehurst* began supplying 4500 kva. each. In October, the light-ship *Impedance* was connected up, supplying Manila with 37,500 kva. Meanwhile, however, the Army assisted in repairing the Caliraya hydro-electric plant, which the USAFFE had ordered disabled in December, 1941, and operation of one of its units began in October. Homes then gradually began to be lighted, but the streets remained dark. The Caliraya plant was turned over to the Government on November 1.

The Army also immediately took charge of the repairs of the Manila water-system, in part destroyed by the Japanese, but service was not restored in large sections of South Manila until the end of October after the system had been turned over to the Government (October 15).

The Manila Railroad Company was under the management of the Army until February 1, 1946, by which time around 40% of the former trackage had been restored and a considerable amount of new equipment had been supplied, although it remained far short of the equipment destroyed on USAFFE orders at the beginning of the war.

Manila was for the greater part a shack-town, a sprawling, giant slum. The main down-town streets were lined with rickety structures built within or on the edges of the toppled ruins of the great buildings, housing cheap curiosities, black-market bars and restaurants, and vulgar side-shows whence issued blasts of raucous jazz from early morning until late at night. Motley, pushing crowds jammed the sidewalks,—American soldiers and sailors, soldiers of the Philippine Army, ex-guerrillas still in their jungle uniforms, peddlers hawking stolen army goods, prostitutes, pimps, pick-pockets, throngs of emaciated, poorly-dressed, tired-looking people, jostling and elbowing each other. Manila once so beautiful and pleasant a city, now a scene of ruin and ravage, presented all the appearance of some hellish fair or carnival, without any gaiety.

There was no more actual hunger. Corpses of those who had died from starvation were no longer to be seen in the streets, as in Japanese times. Relief had been provided throughout the Philippines by the PCAU as long as this organization continued to exist in the various areas. PCAU stores were taken over in most places by the Economic Control Organization in May. In June it was reported that the ECA was issuing a daily average of 1,165,-

000 rations in Greater Manila, 70,000 of these free, while the Civil Affairs branch of the Army was still issuing 220,000 rations in the city. The rations, however, were small and amounted to only from one-half to three-fourth of a pound of food a day. The supplies were sold at reasonable prices, but the quantities were not large enough to affect black-market prices greatly.

Relief was also provided for a time through the incorporation of around 187,000 Filipino troops in the Army, around 100,000 of these being guerrillas and the rest what remained of the Philippine Army. Further relief came through the employment of over 200,000 civilian workers (125,000 in Manila), of whom some 186,000 were day-laborers. There was also the additional employment by army personnel of cooks, washerwomen, etc. The pay was small,—generally ₱1.25 for common labor, which was wholly incommensurate with the cost of living, but the people accepted such jobs because there was nothing else they could do and because of the chances the employment offered of obtaining "extras" in various ways. Many of these workers, finding themselves after three years of deprivation and hunger surrounded with what was to them the almost unbelievable abundance of the army camps, turned inevitably to pilferage and outright thievery.

Because of the great and continuing scarcity of all the desperately needed consumers' goods and the relatively large amounts of money in circulation, prices,—while they did not rise to the fantastic heights of the last months of the Japanese regime, did mount in spite of efforts at price control. A cup of coffee and a doughnut cost ₱1.20, two fried eggs ₱2.50, a poor breakfast or lunch ₱5. Such prices were still being paid in the cheapest restaurants at the time of the election on April 27, 1946. Unbelievable as it may seem, it was a fact that up to the time of the arrival of the two ships which brought civilian cargo in August and September, 1945, every item not locally produced, served in Manila lunch-rooms and restaurants, was obtained from the "black market"—that is, was ultimately stolen from the Army. No civilian could drink a cup of coffee with milk and sugar in these places without thinking, "All this is stolen". While enormous quantities of all kinds of supplies piled up mountainously and in untraceable confusion in the Port Area, the Army made no provision whatever for providing some sort of legitimate source of supply for the public eating houses which necessarily sprang up in the ruins of Manila to serve the civilian population. Army indifference in this respect practically forced crime into existence,—rings of thieves in which service-men were necessary links. The soldiers and sailors, besides their regular messes, had their Red Cross and United Service Organization canteens and "snack-bars" conveniently situated in some exappropriated building, but the thousands of civilians in the streets, who had to trudge from one end of the city to the other on foot, had no place to turn to than these black-market establishments. The Army also contracted not only for the entire output of the Elizalde distilleries and the Soriano brewery, but the Soriano ice-plant. Throughout the whole hot season following the liberation, when the heavy army traffic threw up such clouds of dust that it looked from ships in the Bay as if the city was again afire, there was not a legitimate glass of beer or even of ice-water to be obtained by a civilian...

"Today, the Philippines and the United States are working together in a free partnership in order to promote and protect the interests common to both... Filipinos and Americans, by continuing to work together in mutual confidence and respect, can proudly show the whole world what cooperation among free democratic nations can achieve"—Ambassador Myron M. Cowen.