

What Is the YARDSTICK of LOYALTY?

By J. R. NUGUID

The Author Brings Up the Question of Collaboration

The question of loyalty is grave and delicate. Though the word is simple enough to be understood by the man on the street, it has created a national issue. From the moment that our new leaders who were catapulted into power by the tidal wave of liberation tinkered with this question, the Filipino people were wrapped in a mixture of impulses, — and sorely perplexed. The government employees and members of the former Usaffe were directly hit. The whole citizenry, too, has its misgivings, for is not the implication clear that all those who folded their arms before the enemy are guilty of disloyalty?

As we look in retrospect over the early days of the Japanese occupation of Manila, the memory of a city—grim and ghost-like and its inhabitants horror-filled and crestfallen—surges in sharp contrast to the gay atmosphere of the present. The Philippine Executive Commission was organized. A handful of employees were called to report, but their number increased gradually as the activities of the government multiplied. The employees then could be divided into two classes, namely: (1) those who accepted positions, for fear that refusal might be construed as a hostile act, and (2) those who voluntarily applied under the compelling force of necessity. In either case, it was the popular sentiment that they were serving only the interest of their own people, that they were not contributing to the war effort of the enemy, and that there was nothing in the nature of their work that was incompatible with their loyalty to the Commonwealth and their allegiance to the United States.

The general public was in a similar predicament. With the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, the conquest of the country became an accomplished fact and bowing to the inevitable, they set about in their pre-war occupations. In spite, however, of the strict censorship and the close vigilance of the Kempei, our people continued to talk and discuss day after day the developments of the war as news trickled through the air from distant shores. The less fortunate were hauled in and were either tortured or slain in Fort Santiago; Far Eastern, San Beda, and other hell holes for listening to Allied broadcasts, circulating "false" rumors, committing sabotage, and similar "hostile"

acts.

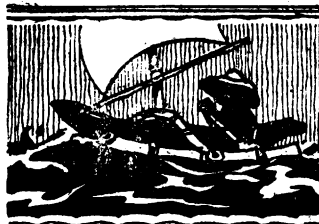
The question now is: Is there anything in the conduct of our people that merits the stigma of disloyalty? To begin with, the cabinet has set a pretty high, if not an arbitrary, standard of loyalty. Only a few can make the grade. The truth of the whole matter is that during the Japanese regime, the Filipino people, whether they sat in government offices, practised their professions, engaged in business, ran trades, culled fishes from the seas, raised crops on the farms, or merely worked on the roads, helped the enemy one way or another. In a narrow sense, that was collaboration. But while they extended that kind of help and collaboration, in the sanctuary of their hearts the spirit of revolt burnt like a flame, defiant and deathless. Have they become disloyal by merely holding public offices? Surely, it takes a lot more than that to be guilty of disloyalty. The attending circumstances, the background, and particularly the motive and the actions while holding office must be thoroughly appraised and considered.

Viewed from the strictly legal standpoint, the charge lacks the support of any precedent, authoritative opinion, or judicial pronouncement. From the ethical side, it is insisted that it was our duty to defend the cause at the cost of our lives. A local editor even went so far as to say that those who were afraid to die in the past regime are not fit to live in this new government. Is this the correct yardstick by which loyalty should be measured? Do we not ridicule the Japanese for their fanatical and futile resistance when surrender is the wiser and more honorable course to follow?

In the battle of Bataan, the Filipino forces, cornered, outnumbered, and outequipped, held the enemy at bay for a little over three

months to the amazement of the entire world. When, however, the last hope of victory whittled away, around seventy thousand men laid down their arms to put an end to an unequal conflict. That epochal battle was lost, but the nation rose to new heights of honor and glory and our heroic soldiers emerged from the battlefields as gallant defenders of democracy. When they, who were professional soldiers and in duty bound to defend the cause, surrendered, was it not to avoid useless death? Yet why should our civilian population be now assailed and rebuked for failing to do what our armed forces failed to accomplish in Bataan? And have our army officers and enlisted men who fought in the first episode of this war turned disloyal by serving in government offices or in the Japanese-made Philippine constabulary, when the fact is they were merely waiting, anxiously and patiently, for the more appropriate and opportune time to strike against the yellow invaders? In their time, the Japanese hated them because they refused to drop their pro-American leaning; now, their own brothers hate them because they have been pro-Japanese. What a tragic paradox!

As for those who held positions of responsibility, it is hard to believe that they were prompted by political or material ambitions. In fact, no amount of ballyhoo and slander can shake the people's faith in the integrity and patriotism of their leaders who, with incomparable skill and tact, manned our ship of state during the most critical and turbulent period of our national history. In the faith in the integrity and patriotism as not to realize the right from the beginning that the Japanese set-up was not permanent; secondly, they were used as mere fronts, the real power being exercised by the sabre-rattling Samurai; thirdly, no public office at the time held any glamour because the government did not have an iota of support from the people; and lastly, there was absolutely no money in it, the salary of a minister of state being less than one thousand pesos a month, an amount which during the last months of the Japanese occupation could not even



buy a pair of shoes. It could be possible that they accepted their jobs because they did not want to be rushed to their graves. Like our forces in Bataan they relied, and for good reasons, on that old proverb that sometimes prudence is the better part of valor. Or it might also be that with the welfare of their people at heart, they accepted their jobs so as to be in a position to help and protect their countrymen or at least to minimize their suffering. We could picture with grim horror the atrocities and brutalities the people would have suffered if the Japanese had directly governed or placed unscrupulous Filipinos at the help of the government.

The case of Mr. Justice Jose Abad Santos who preferred death to obedience to the Japanese warlord has been cited to bolster a self-centered cause, but this case is singular, unique. It is thus that there is only one Jose Abad Santos as there is only one Jose Rizal. But there is this great difference, that when they offered their lives, neither they nor any one in their behalf chided their countrymen for not following in their footsteps.

No Filipino will ever forget the dreadful memory of the Japanese soldier. To his distorted mind, the right of conquest was absolute, all-embracing. Conqueror, lord, and sovereign, he was all. Tutored in the ways of his Axis partner, the German Nazi, he improved to perfection the latter's technique to cow the people of conquered territories into complete submission and terror. Those who remained in the cities and towns, worked under the forced labor system, faced the gory "magic eye" in a "zona" roundup, or saw the inside of secret chambers of torture, know what it meant to come under the heels of the oppressor. Of Japanese brutality and ruthlessness, we have only to look to the shambles and the blood-soaked soil of Manila to convince ourselves. What chance could they have against such hordes of barbarians? How they must have wished that enough ships were sent to their rescue during the siege of Bataan so that they might have reached the

United States and there amidst safety, tranquility and beautiful surroundings joined hands in laying the groundwork for the liberation and rehabilitation of our country.

We pay tribute to our guerrillas for their heroic feat. We also welcome the rise of our new leaders. They bring youth and enthusiasm to our resurrected political structure. But while we glorify all those who participated in this patriotic movement and give them our encouragement and support, we ask the men that now guide our destiny to be slow and cautious in passing judgment over the conduct of their fellow-countrymen. The flurry of excitement and the lust for power are apt to blur the vision of man and warp his good judgment. If we persist in a blind purge, our country will be split wide open. This is not the time for mudslinging, recrimination, and division. This is the time to restore order out of chaos, reparation out of wreckage, and happiness out of misery. In the case of those who, after proper investigation, are found to have sold themselves to the enemy or have gone out of their way in their collaboration, let the punishments be swift and relentless. But in the case of the greater number of Filipinos who heaven knows are innocent, let their case be decided with understanding and justice.

P2,000,000 in Goods Due Soon

The Commonwealth Government thru representations made by Secretary Hernandez of Finance has secured from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration the shipment of P2,000,000 worth of consumers' goods and medical supplies, according to a recent Malacañan announcement. The shipment will consist of one million six hundred thousand pesos worth of goods and four hundred thousand worth of medicines. The cargo will be brought by the first available boat that leaves San Francisco.

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