

POWER IN THE SONG OF "WEAKNESS"

By RAUL S. MANGLAPUS

WE were out in the yard, on one of those rare occasions when "through the magnanimity and benevolence of the Imperial Japanese Army" we were removed from the stench and filth of the cells and allowed to bask a bit in the sun.

The day was a very special occasion and the air was filled with song. This was the Japanese Military Prison at Old Bilibid, where advanced Fort Santiago inmates were brought one step nearer to release, or to Muntinglupa, or to a nameless grave at the North Cemetery.

Today the Japanese Military Police was turning the prison over to regular Military Prison Guards.

I remember the date very well—March 9, 1943. That day Raymunda Guidote was trooped out of her lonely cell and made to sing before kempeis, Jap and Filipino and American prisoners. The kempeis thought they'd have a little celebration, so they called alternately on Japs and Filipinos and Americans to do their act.

But now the time was up and the kempeis thought they'd end up in style by making the Filipinos and American prisoners sing in chorus followed by the Jap prisoners. I don't know how it happened but I found myself the choirmaster, at a loss at what song to evoke from those emaciated bodies worn down with "kangkong" and torture.

It was a motley group I had before me but it struck me immediately that the great majority of us were Catholics. We couldn't sing our national anthem, because that was taboo, but we could sing something just as national as Julian Felipe's music—the hymn to the Sacred Heart: "No Mas Amor Que El Tuyo."

Not everyone knew the lyrics, but those who didn't followed up magnificently, humming the tune. We performed a rendition that brought tears to our own eyes and a look at surprise on the faces of the Japs.

"Very good," the kempei lieutenant said "but now listen to the Japanese sing. We do not sing like women. We do not sing of weakness like you "Kuristangs." We sing like men, of strength and power. The song you will now hear is about our Empire and its 2600 years of glorious history. Listen."

The Jap prisoners were called to attention. Hands on hips those looters, deserters, murderers began to sing "Kono hi kono sora, Kono hikari," the Niponese march of destiny that was then being broadcast throughout "Greater East Asia." They would certainly have drowned us out in a singing duel. For they were all rosetate, healthy with the daily sun and good soya-sauced food. The rice and "kangkong" were not

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Power In The Song . . .

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good for our voices. Besides, did not the kempei say our song was of weakness; theirs, of strength?

But this the bucktoothed Jap did not know—that we were singing to One whose forces were to kill forever their myth of 2600 years. But on March 9, 1943, like the eighteen millions outside those prison walls, our voices indeed were weak. And like the eighteen millions there was nothing for us to do but wait, wait in our cells, like people were waiting in the hills and in the seething underground—wait and—pray . . .

We were marched back to our cells at sundown, and in the dull twilight after the afternoon respite, we took to practising again the real strength of that song of weakness.

We began to pray again. Each of us had our own prayers, but whenever the guard would allow it and we could pray together, there was no question what it was going to be. Woven from yarn pulled out from the blue and white Phillipine Army towels issued to us, there lay hidden in most trousers pockets a rosary, a real one with a crucifix made by skilled prisoners' hands out of the same yarn and little splinters. There we fished out at community prayer time and, directing our minds to the Mother of God, began to pray for strength, for victory, and for peace.

Back in Fort Santiago it had been the same. It was less quiet there, the loud wailing from the torture rooms piercing the night air and the daylight calm alike. But the prisoners there fought against torture and despair with the same weapon which we fought the hunger and mental agony in Old Bilibid—prayer.

Through all the cells the urge was spontaneous, to kneel one's knees, even if they still pained from last night's kneeling on broken glass, and to pray. And, what was more eloquently spontaneous, we would eurn to the prayer which to us seemed most universal—the rosary. In cell fourteen "Ju Young Go," where I languished with fourteen others at a time,, Guillermo Victoria, the counterfeiter, Jose Lubao, the looter, Alfredo Filart, the Army Lieutenant from the Baguio Academy, Nelson Van Sinclair, the non-Catholic American who was contact man and supplier of Guerillas, prayed together to the Mother of God.

Those ignorant of the Our Father and the Hail Mary received instructions from those who knew through furtive whispers—for the guards would allow us to pray at times, but never to talk to each other. The almond-eyed kempei san, peering through the tiny window into our cell, smiled quizzically at fifteen enemies of Japan kneeling together, muttering "Kurisiang" prayers, and counting on their fingers! He probably thought the finger-counting was our Christian parallel to the ceremonial clap before the Buddhist shrine.

In old Bilibid we didn't have to count on our fingers, we had, as I mentioned above, fashioned rosaries out of towel yarn. We dreamed of taking them home with us as souvenirs, if we were ever released. But one day the fat prison warden had us lined up in the yard, had our pockets searched for our rosaries, expressed regrets at depriving us of our mementoes of "Kuristo" and had them all burned.

One of the guards explained later that the warden feared

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Editorials

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ility is particularly true in the case of industries that turn out export products which have to meet open competition in the foreign market.

We must not only avoid direct taxes but also those imposed on other elements affecting production like transportation and capital goods.

We must not be lured by the elements of collectibility, which may perhaps be a good reason for imposing taxes on export products, for the reason that sure collection may be reduced to an insignificant figure when production declines.

There is still an imposing amount of uncollected taxes. Laws have been ground to reach the sure sources of taxes but unfortunately the machinery for collection is not as efficient as it should be. We suggest therefore that this matter be given first priority in the implementation of a revised tax system as any accumulation of laws will only mean more evasion by some of our elements who are specialized in tax evasion and who are enriching themselves not only by the non-payment of taxes but specially as a result of the very unfair, undue and we may say, criminal use of this money to thoroughly compete with those that comply with the letter and spirit of our tax laws.

The structure of our business today requires mass production in most cases, specially when we wish to lower prices by bringing down the cost of production. This in turn necessitates polling of our individual resources through the formation of corporations. But by increasing taxes on corporations, we will be adding a new obstacle to the already difficult task of attracting capital due to our individualistic nature, as a result of which only those corporations formed by aliens who are endowed with the know-how to avoid taxes, using unethical if not illegal means, will be the only ones that will thrive.

MOISES T. GUERRERO

A Friend In . . .

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papers here," he wrote, "have recently been carrying very distressing articles in reference to the Philippines and I am fearful that there are many in the country who are not familiar with the intricacies of the problems facing your government."

While he has not yet visited the Philippines, he has a good grasp of local problems and conditions. He is in constant communication with the Philippine Ex-Political Prisoners' Association and keeps close contact with the Philippine Embassy in Washington. Among his close friends also are two former American Ambassadors to the Philippines, Paul V. McNutt and Emmet O'Neal, who all belong to the Post-Mortem Club, an organization in Washington which counts among its members many officials and leaders including Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman and former Defense Secretary Louis Johnson.

Born of humble parents in the small town of Spartanburg, South Carolina, Mr. Wood early saw in life and need for social justice for the poor. He supported himself through high school and early college by running a newspaper route, acting as a plumber's assistant and operating a cleaning and pressing establishment.

Shortly after graduation from Wofford College in 1917, he volunteered as a private in the United States Army and after several assignments to various camps, was detailed to the Motor Transport Corps Headquarters in Washington, D.C. where he became one of the aides to the Chief of the Service, General Charles B. Drake.

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we might use them to commit suicide or to strangle the Kempeis with. Whatever the reason, the loss of the rosaries merely served to intensify our devotion to the garland offering to Mary.

Escape, after two years! Out of the rear gate, bag in hand, joy in the heart, rosary in the trousers pocket. Up the hills with the Hunters' Guerrollas and Marking's camp to join the intelligence with the 6th Army observer.

The liberation came, and so did the defeat of Japan. I wonder if that Kempei Lieutenant who called our hymn to the Sacred Heart song of weakness is still alive. Japan is not so strong now. But the Sacred Heart and Mary are firmly entrenched in our altars and in our hearts, thanks to that hymn and the Rosary:

It was while he was serving in the Army that he started to take up law at Georgetown University Law School. When he graduated from the university in 1921, the law school was celebrating its golden anniversary and he was chosen the jubilee orator.

He was admitted to the Bar of South Carolina on May 1, 1921, to the Supreme Court of the United States on May 26, 1924, and to the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on February 13, 1922.

Besides the Post-Mortem Club, Mr. Wood is a member of the Wofford College Alumni Association, Georgetown Alumni Association, Sigma Nu Phi Legal Fraternity, Forty and Eight, Army and Navy Union, Veterans of Foreign Wars, United Spanish War Veterans.

He is a Past Master of Columbia Lodge No. 3, F.A., A.M., a 32nd Degree Mason, and a Shriner. He has been chairman of several committees of the Columbia Bar Association, one of which took charge of studying the reorganization of Municipal Courts. He has been delegate to several national conventions of the Democratic Party and is a member of the Democratic Central Committee of the District of Columbia.

For two and a half years, he was Chairman of the Local Draft Board (World War II). He has two sons, Harlan Wood, Jr., who is a junior at Brown University and John Paul Wood, who goes to school in Washington.

A few days ago, he reminded the PEPPA of the coming opening of the new Congress, assuring the organization that he will continue his fight for them until justice is won.

Dra. Tomasa F. Halili

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