

THE DUTY IS OURS

By MAYOR LEON G. GUINTO

Speech on February 25, 1943 before the Convention of Governors, Mayors, and Constabulary Inspectors of Luzon.

I DO not wish to see this important convention close without offering a few remarks on behalf of myself and my fellow mayors, the provincial governors, and inspectors here gathered, with respect to the valuable advice, instructions, ideas and principles that have been given and taken up in the course of our conferences. I believe the ideas and principles enunciated in this convention by the various speakers, notably by Their Excellencies, the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces, the Director-General of the Japanese Military Administration, and the Chairman of the Philippine Executive Commission, and the different Commissioners, are of such far-reaching consequence to the welfare and future of our country that we would be recreant to our duties to miss their significance and to fail to play our part in making these ideas and principles an intimate possession of every citizen in all our cities and towns and in the remotest communities.

Convention a Success

Before I proceed further, permit me to express the general feeling of gratitude reigning among my colleagues of this convention and to express in their behalf our felicitations to the authorities mainly responsible for the success of this week of conferences. We wish to thank the Commissioner of the Interior, Hon. Jose P. Laurel, for the very happy idea of calling this convention and giving us the opportunity for mutual contact among ourselves and for direct consultation and advice with the leaders of the Central Government Administration, especially the highest Japanese Military authorities. In these conferences we have been shown ample illustrations for the solution of our many problems of local administration. We are now better informed about the real political, economic and spiritual conditions existing in different parts of the country. We thank the Honorable Commissioner of the Interior for his decision, interest and determination in carrying out a practical program of administration for the cities, municipalities and provinces under him. His interest, his courage and his decision are a most inspiring demonstration of his capacity for real leadership as an official of our Central Government, which is most necessary in this crucial moment in the history of our people.

As I said yesterday, in behalf of my colleagues, I wish likewise to reiterate the expression of our appreciation to the Chairman and to all the members of the Philippine Executive Commission who attended these conference, for giving addresses and providing

full information on the activities of their respective departments to the end that we may the better be able to carry out our obligations and responsibilities in our own particular spheres of duty and action. Then I wish also, in behalf of my colleagues to express our thanks to the Japanese Advisers and their assistants, to the Assistant Commissioners, to the Bureau Directors and other officials of the Central Administrative Organization who came to these conferences and gave freely of their time in providing data and advice in the interest of local governments. I can ill afford to omit in extending likewise our gratitude to the KALIBAPI, especially to its Director-General and the other members of the Executive Board for their cooperation in these conferences and in showing us the way towards working out the complete unification of the country, the achievement of which is set as a primary prerequisite for the granting of freedom.

We Must Play Our Part

AND now permit me to add a word on those ideas and principles discussed in these conferences affecting the grant of ultimate independence for our country. We are all witnesses to the earnestness and conviction with which our leaders here, Japanese and Filipino, particularly Japanese, expressed themselves on this question and we would be indicating an utter lack of consciousness of the vital developments today which are leading to a crucial decision with reference to our freedom if we did not give heed to what we have heard in the course of these meetings.

Negligence, indifference or apathy on our part, after hearing our leaders, would certainly demonstrate that we are lacking in seriousness, that we do not realize our tremendous opportunities, that we are incapable of meeting the responsibility of self-determination, that we are lacking in courage and in vision, that we are indifferent to the future of our children, and that we are willing to accept the indictment of posterity as leaders in our respective spheres and in our communities who, by stupidity or ignorance, have refused to rise to the occasion.

Nobody in his right mind and with the welfare of his country at heart, and with pride in his race and in its capacity for bigger and greater things could remain insensible to the challenge that our Japanese and Filipino leaders have thrown to us. It would be to our lasting shame to be charged by coming generations with apathy and insensitiveness at a time when the decision affecting their destiny was up and we missed to heed it and play our part.

Japan a Brother Nation

FROM what the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces in the Philippines and from what the Director-General of the Japanese Military Administration have said, I am convinced that nobody, no Filipino, need ever entertain any fear or doubt regarding the true aim of the Imperial Japanese Forces in the Philippines. They are here to help us work out our liberation. They are here to offer us their sincerest cooperation to make us worthy of the honor of independence. They are here to place at our command the endless resources of their experience in self-government and in national self-respect, so that we Filipinos may enter into our heritage as free men, as true members of an Oriental brotherhood.

Even the United States, if she truly desires the happiness and well-being of the Philippines, rather than criticize and condemn, should be, if not happy, at least satisfied that we Filipinos are being treated with unexampled generosity and understanding at the hands of her enemy, which is Japan. The generous treatment that we have been privileged to enjoy at the hands of the Imperial Japanese Forces should be considered by the United States as nothing less than an indirect tribute to whatever altruistic policies she herself might have tried to enforce during her tenure of tutelage over us Filipinos. The United States should be happy that even her enemy nation, Japan, has proven willing to take up where she left off in guiding us on the path to freedom by actually doing everything possible to enable us to achieve independence in the shortest time possible and to live in peace and cooperation among nations who, by

the grace of God and of geography, are our neighbors in this part of the world.

For us Filipinos who have endured all manner of tribulations through centuries of foreign overlordship, there can be no happier obligation than to rise to our opportunity in the present hour and make sure that the spirit which animates our present leaders today from a brother nation reaches and touches the heart of every Filipino citizen in every corner of this country.

Pledges His Best

FOR this reason, we stand today, with profound gratitude in our hearts, to the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces in the Philippines, the Director-General of the Military Administration, and the Commissioner of the Interior, ready to fulfill our pledge that when we go home, back to our respective communities and provinces, we shall have no doubts, no reservations, in carrying out faithfully and completely the instructions that we have received in the course of this convention and to spread among our own people a compelling consciousness and desire for peace and order, for a regeneration of our national energies so that we may all pull effectively together in the construction of a New Philippines. As for me, modesty aside, I know that I shall strive with all my soul and energy, with my more than a million fellow Filipino citizens of Manila to propagate the vital ideas and principles that have been our share in this convention. Ours is the epochal privilege and opportunity to speed by determined and honest endeavor, the day of the granting of our freedom. We will not fail.

