



SUCH NOW IS THE BARRIO OF IMURUNG

by ISABELO PINSON
Barrio Teacher

I am a barrio teacher assigned to one of the remotest barrios of Baggao, Cagayan. I am married. I have only three children now. I used to have eight, but five of them died during the war. Before the war I was happy and contented, for although I received a meager salary, the cost of living was then low. I could save a little for future use. I could send my children to school. I could subscribe to educational magazines and newspapers. I could also afford to buy one or two professional books yearly for my professional advancement. I was loved and respected by the people with whom I worked and for whom I served, and was looked upon not only as their educational leader but also as their social and moral leader, in fact as their leader in everything that concerned the welfare and advancement of the barrio. Such was I before the war.

The war came, and all of us know too well how much we suffered from the brutality of the invaders. I need not mention here, for we all know, the sufferings, the fears, the worries, the insults, the threats, the indignities, the tortures, the degradations, the endless privations, we were subjected to by the enemy. Many died during the war, victims of atrocities. In the barrio where I stayed more than 150 people were killed (apparently for no reason) at all. Many died of malnutrition and the lack of medicine, among whom were my five children.

The liberation came, and with it came the reopening of the schools. I was reappointed as a teacher and assigned in the same barrio where I was before the

war. On my shoulders, therefore, fell the heavy responsibility of rehabilitating and reconstructing my school, a similar responsibility which fell, too, on the shoulders of the other barrio teachers like me. We were on our way to recovery, for we have already succeeded in repairing our dilapidated school buildings or in putting up one in place of the one burned during the war. But the storms of April 3 and 4, and July 16, 1946 came and when these storms had passed, so had my school building and the other school buildings in Baggao. Many of my new school equipments were broken beyond repair and the books, soaked and destroyed beyond recognition.

The same storms caused untold misery to my people. Homes were destroyed, and so were our rice and corn crops and fruit trees. What the people could have harvest and save did not last long, and now they are famished and sick. Many have died because of lack of medical care and buried without benefit of religious rites. And still more get sick and more die. Many, too, have left the place to become servants in Aparri, Tuguegarao, and even in Manila. Children less than ten years old were given away in exchange for a few gantas of rice or corn, or even given free to those who were willing to get them. Although the government is doing everything within its limited means to send aids in the forms of foodstuffs, clothings and medicines, yet it cannot cope with the situation.

What shall I do? My yearly enrolment and my monthly enrolment have now gone down very low. My daily at-

tendance is indeed very poor. Those who come to school are very irregular in attendance. They have no paper, no pencils, no books to use. The school children cannot buy the supplies they need in school because they have no money, despite the fact that the prices of these school supplies are within the reach of all.

Sir, my school building is not yet repaired. Its GI roof was riddled with machinegun bullets during the war. So were its posts, beams, rafters and floor. Its walls were removed, blown down by the storm of July 16, 1946. The fence, the pergola and gate, and the toilets are not yet repaired. I have approached several times the officials of the PTA, the *teniente del barrio*, and the pupils' parents and requested them to attend to their repair. But they could

only promise to attend to the repairs after the rice harvest for their time is being devoted to looking for something to eat.

Such now is the barrio of Imurung, Baggao. In pre-war days it was one of the richest barrios of Baggao. Now it is one of the poorest, if not the poorest. Then its people were happy and contented; now poor, unhappy and discontented. Then it was full of life; now a "ghost barrio" inhabited by sad living human skeletons.

I am the teacher here, the spiritual leader, the inspiration for achievement. I have to do my job. I have to do it even if I died doing it. But in the meantime I look around and ask almost in despair of ever getting outside help: What shall I do? What shall I do?

APOLOGY

Because of unusually heavy demand, we have included much civil service review material. In subsequent issues, we shall put out teaching aids.

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