

## GALLERY OF NATIONAL HEROES

**TANDANG SORA (MELCHORA AQUINO)**

GRANDMOTHER OF THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION IS EXILED

By FRANCISCO CARBALLO

## THE CAST

MELCHORA AQUINO (*Tandang Sora*)—Benefactress of Bonifacio and the Katipunan  
 JUAN—Sora's oldest son  
 SATURNINA—Her daughter  
 CAPITAN GENERAL, SECRETARY, MILITARY ATTENDANT, and PRISON GUARD

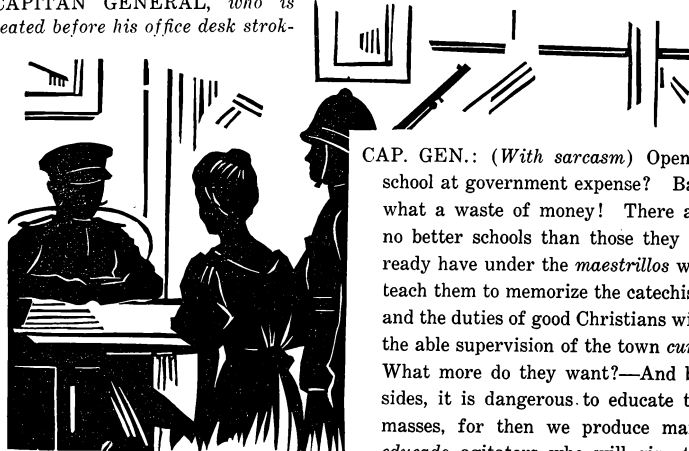
## Scene I

(TANDANG SORA is accused of helping and harboring Bonifacio and his men. Her case, among other things, is taken up by the SECRETARY to the CAPITAN GENERAL, who is seated before his office desk strok-

ing his mustache with an air of great dignity. The SECRETARY sits on his right and peruses a bunch of official papers. The MILITARY ATTENDANT stands at the door.)

CAPITAN GENERAL: Well, Mr. Secretary, what is the business for today?

SECRETARY: Here is a petition from the people of barrio Ilawan, asking the government to open a public school for their children.



CAP. GEN.: (*With sarcasm*) Open a school at government expense? Bah, what a waste of money! There are no better schools than those they already have under the *maestrillos* who teach them to memorize the catechism and the duties of good Christians with the able supervision of the town *cura*. What more do they want?—And besides, it is dangerous to educate the masses, for then we produce many *educado* agitators who will give the

government plenty of trouble. The petition is disapproved! (*Pounds his fist on the desk and pauses briefly.*) You better check up the name of the smart *filibustero* who is leading this movement, so that when any trouble breaks up in that town, we are sure to get hold of our man.—The next business.

SEC.: The Court-martial has found Teodoro Kidlat, Jose Talas, and others guilty of conspiring against the church and the government. Reverend Friar Merced considers these men dangerous, and on his recommendation, the culprits are sentenced to be shot on the Bagumbayan Field. The sentence is here for your approval. (*Hands the paper to the CAP. GEN.*)

CAP. GEN.: (*Glances over the paper.*) Their names sound bad enough, and if the good father believes that these men are dangerous, what else could we do? Let the traitors die. (*Signs the paper.*) Their execution is approved! (*Returns the paper to the SEC.*) The next business.

SEC.: Melchora Aquino, alias Tandang Sora, of Pasong Tamo, Caloocan, is accused of aiding, feeding, and harboring Bonifacio and his Katipuneros. The military department believes that this Sora is a dangerous woman, and that she should be sentenced as another traitor.

CAP. GEN.: (*Surprised.*) Aha, Melchora Aquino, Tandang Sora, an old

woman turned *insurrecta*! This is serious. (*To the MILITARY ATTENDANT.*) Oye, *Ayudante*, bring this Melchora Aquino to my presence.

MILITARY ATTENDANT: (*Salutes.*) Yes, Your Excellency. (*Leaves the room.*)

CAP. GEN.: Mr. Secretary, who are interested in the pardon of this woman?

SEC.: Her son and daughter, Señor.

MILIT. ATTEND.: (*Salutes.*) Your Excellency, here is Melchora Aquino.

TANDANG SORA: *Magandang araw po, Señor.*

CAP. GEN.: *Buenas dias*; Are you Melchora Aquino, or Tandang Sora?

SORA: I am at your service, Señor.

CAP. GEN.: I hear that you are feeding and harboring Bonifacio and his gang of bandits and cutthroats. (*Harshly.*) What do you have to say for yourself?

SORA: I am not an *insurrecta*, Señor, for I am a peace-loving old woman. You refer to Bonifacio and his men as bandits and cutthroats, but you will pardon me for saying that, as far as I know, these men are neither bandits nor cutthroats, but are as law-abiding and God-fearing as I am myself. Persecuted and hounded like

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TANDANG SORA . . .

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criminals by *cazadores* and *guardia civiles*, they are forced to leave their peaceful occupations and go in hiding. It is true, Señor, that I have fed them and others, for poor as I am, I do not forget that I am a Christian, and it is my duty to feed and help my hungry and needy fellow-human beings. I have even fed *cazadores* and *guardia civiles* that happened to pass our way, and I never charged them a centavo for the meals. What is wrong about that Señor?

CAP. GEN.: But, *por Dios*, don't you know that Bonifacio and his followers are *Katipuneros*, and as such, they are enemies of public order and the government, and those who protect and sympathize with them in any way also become criminals and enemies of Spain? And because I have strong proofs that you have done these, you are a criminal and must be punished according to law.

SORA: Señor, I have not the slightest idea that Bonifacio and his men are enemies of the government. I do know, however, that they are patriots and human beings, and in feeding them I felt I was doing my plain duty towards man and God.

CAP. GEN.: (Stands up and pounds the desk with his fist.) The facts against you prove you guilty beyond doubt, and there is no way out of it. The law must take its course; but in consideration, however, for the past services of your late husband,

*Kabisang Okong*, who was most assiduous in collecting the King's taxes in your barrio, and the fact that you are a woman, I will have your life spared, and instead of being executed on the Bagumbayan Field, you shall be exiled for life to the Marianas in the Pacific Ocean. Mr. Secretary, the deportation of this woman is ordered. (Sits down.)

SEC.: (Writes on the paper.) Deportation to Marianas, yes, Señor.

SORA: Señor, if that is to be my fate, I am glad to take my punishment for the sake of my country and people. I only regret that being a woman and old, I have done but little for their welfare.

CAP. GEN. Ayudante, take this woman to the *bartolina*, and instruct the officer in charge to ship her on the first boat that leaves for the Marianas.

MILIT. ATTEND.: (Salutes.) Yes, Señor. (To SORA) Pronto, to your prison cell. (Both leave the office.)

CAP. GEN.: Is that all, Mr. Secretary? This has been a busy day for me.

SEC.: Well, there are other urgent matters for consideration. Your Excellency, but—

CAP. GEN.: Yes, but this afternoon I am invited to a *fiesta* where I am the guest of honor, and those matters can afford to wait.

SEC.: The pleasure is yours, General. (Both stand and leave the office.)

Scene II

(In prison TANDANG SORA is behind bars. An armed

GUARD stands at the gate. JUAN and SATURNINA arrive.)

JUAN: *Magandang araw po*, Señor.

GUARD: (Ports arm.) What do you want?

JUAN: My sister and I wish to visit our mother, Tandang Sora.

GUARD: Have you a pass?

JUAN: Yes, sir, here it is. (Shows the pass.)

GUARD: (Glances over the pass.) *Muy bien*, you may enter. (Shoulders arm.)

(JUAN and SATURNINA enter and see their mother behind bars.)

JUAN AND SATURNINA: Oh, Inang! (Each, in turn, kisses SORA'S hand extended between bars.)

SORA: Ay, my dear children, God bless you! (Makes sign of blessing.)

JUAN: But, Mother, must you really leave us?

SATURNINA: Oh, you must not leave us, mother dear!

SORA: Fate so decrees; those who have interceded for me have failed, and there is nothing more that can be done. We must bow to the will of God.

SAT.: But, Mother, when shall we meet again?

SORA: Never again, I fear, my child, for I am a *destierro* for life in the Marianas.

SAT.: Can't I go with you and take care of you during your exile, mother?

SORA: No, Tinay. You, your father's gem and my life's joy—you my innocent child to suffer banishment with me? Never,—you don't

know what you are talking about, my child.

Though it breaks my heart to part with you, my beloved children, I am happy in the thought that you who are left behind will be able to help our people's cause in every way possible.

JUAN: That is true, mother. My late father Okong's wise counsels and your undying love for us are engraved in our souls, and I assure you, Inang, that, as your oldest son, I will take good care of my brothers and sisters during your absence.

SORA: Well spoken, my son. My parting advice to you, my children, is this: Fear not, work hard, be kind to your fellow-men, and continue my unfinished work. Remember that Bathala is an ever-watchful God. He is just and rewards good deeds and punishes bad deeds among men and nations. He is the strength of the weak. He blesses the just and chastises the wicked. Put your trust in Him. Our patriots have paved the way, and I see brighter days for our country and people.

Bitter it is to part, but in distant Marianas, in my prayers and in my dreams, I will always be with you, my beloved children.—The hour of parting has come: kiss me good-bye.

(SATURNINA kisses SORA'S face and hand, and JUAN kisses her hand only.)

SORA: God bless you, my children. Impart my love and blessings to your brothers and sister at home.

#### A TIMELY SOCK

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The children lighted the candles and arranged the flowers on their teacher's grave. While they were happily exchanging news and jokes they were startled by a sudden cry of FIRE! HELP! FIRE! They looked around and saw a woman running here and there confusedly. Because of carelessness her skirt had caught fire. The fire was fast spreading over her. Nonong and Cornelio ran to the woman.

"Stop! Don't run! Lie down!" the boys shouted. The woman lost her presence of mind and would not listen. Nonong knew what would happen if the woman would not stop running. He ran after her and gave her a sock on the jaw which rendered her unconscious. He caught her head as she fell and quickly but gently laid her on the ground. Cornelio, who had followed Nonong, took off his coat and wrapped it over the burning portion of the woman's skirt and rolled her. The fire was soon extinguished. Nonong stopped a taxi that was then passing by and requested the chauffeur to take the old woman to the hospital for first aid.

JUAN: Mother, all your wishes will be carried out.

SAT.: Inang, my brothers, sister, and I will always pray for you, and God, the Merciful, will surely bring you back to us some day.

SORA: So may it be, my child! God be with you always, darling ones: farewell!

(JUAN and SATURNINA leave the scene, and the curtain goes down.)

#### JOE AT THE MAGIC POOL

(Continued from page 309)

"The man is playing a game and this should not go on," Joe said to himself as he left the place.

As soon as Joe reached home, he lost no time in meeting Rod. He described to the latter the scene he had just witnessed. Then together they went to the Chief of Police and told him all about it.

"The man," Joe told the Chief, "will get that money tonight when the neighborhood becomes quiet."

"That cannot be possible," the Chief argued. "The package although heavy, will have traveled far by that time."

"The package is still at the place where it first landed," Joe assured the Chief. "That there is a net at the bottom of the Pool, I have no doubt. The man is too clever to lose it."

"What do you want us to do then?" asked the Chief.

"This evening at dark," Joe said, "we shall go to the place. You and your policemen will wear ordinary clothes to avoid suspicion. When the man draws the net, you arrest him."

"We may try," was all that the Chief said.

That evening three men and two boys were walking towards the place. The men were carrying their hats and shirts. They looked like people from the corn harvest. Soon this lit-

(Please turn to the next page)

treatment.

Do you approve of what Nonong did? Some of you do, but some don't. You may hold a little debate on whether Nonong was right or wrong.