

■ An American reporter wrote about General Gregorio del Pilar, the intrepid Filipino soldier and leader who died fighting for his country against a superior American force.

THE OLD FILIPINO

For more than a year now, government propagandists have fed the nation a lot of pap about that preposterous creature called the "New Filipino." What was wrong with the Old Filipino? The day before yesterday, we paused to honor an Old Filipino named Andres Bonifacio who valiantly raised the standard of revolt against Spain and fought selflessly for freedom until he was assassinated upon the orders of his ambitious rivals. Too many of the present-day "New Filipinos" about whom the administration talks so glibly were descended, not from Bonifacio, but from the breed of politicians who decreed his murder.

Today, the nation commemorates the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Tirad Pass and the memory of the men who went into battle against

the advancing American troops — all of them knowing that they would die. Were they not all Old Filipinos? The oldest of them all in wisdom and self-sacrifice was their young commander, Gen. Gregorio del Pilar, aged 22, who gave up all his dreams of youth and tomorrow in order that you and I might salvage some measure of hope and pride from the record of his generation.

I am not going to write a column today about Del Pilar and his men. Let an American war correspondent named Richard Henry Little of the Chicago Tribune, reporting on the battle from the other side, tell the story. It is one of the finest pieces of reporting I have ever read.

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"It was a great fight," Little wrote from the field

on that day in 1899, "that was fought away up on the trail of lonely Tirad Pass on that Saturday morning of Dec. 2. It brought glory to Major March's battalion of the 33rd Volunteer Infantry who were the victors. It brought no discredit to the little band of sixty Filipinos who fought and died there. Sixty was the number that at Aguinaldo's orders had come down into the pass that morning to arrest the onward march of the Americans. Seven were all that went back over the pass that night to tell Aguinaldo that they had tried and failed. Fifty-three of them were either killed or wounded. And among them, the last to retreat, we found the body of young Gen. Gregorio del Pilar."

"We had seen him cheering his men in the fight. One of our companies crouched up close under the side of the cliff where he had built his first intrenchment, heard his voice continually during the fight urging his men to greater effort, scolding them, praising them, cursing, appealing one moment to their love of their

native land and the next instant threatening to kill them himself if they did not stand firm."

"Driven from the first intrenchment he fell back slowly to the second in full sight of our sharpshooters and under a heavy fire. Not until every man around him in the second intrenchment was down did he turn his white horse around and ride slowly up the winding trail. Then we who were below saw an American squirm his way out to the top of a high flat rock, and take deliberate aim at the figure on the white horse. We held our breath, not knowing whether to pray that the sharpshooter would shot straight or miss. Then came the spiteful crack on the Krag rifle and the man on horseback rolled to the ground, and when the troops charging up the mountain-side reached him, the boy general of the Filipinos was dead."

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"We went up We saw a solitary figure lying on the road. The body was almost stripped of clothing,