



Three Years Of

Enemy Occupation

THE ISSUE OF
POLITICAL COLLABORATION
IN THE PHILIPPINES

By CLARO M. RECTO

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE material used in this account does not pretend to include facts privy to the chief actors in the story of Philippine collaboration. This is neither the time nor the occasion to expect them. It remains to these actors individually to disclose them according as they are afforded the opportunity—at their trials or in their memoirs; and in the mass of surviving official or personal documents still in private hands that will form part of the heritage of subsequent investigators.

All the facts presented here are only such facts as were and still are accessible to any ordinary private citizen literate enough to notice and recall them or interested enough to check them up if he is so disposed. It is the author's conviction that even with these facts alone as they are, which are available to all, it is sufficient to understand the collaboration question and be intelligent about it without necessarily aspiring to deify or crucify any fellow citizen, whatever the moral value of such an aspiration.

The issue of political collaboration under the Japanese régime is the problem of recognizing and establishing a substantial basis on which to carry on with the imperishable heritage left by Rizal and other Filipino heroes without apology to anyone in the world. The Filipinos stand or fall on what they themselves did when the wolves were around, so God help them.

F. M.

INTRODUCTORY

"THREE Years of Enemy Occupation" by Claro M. Recto, former associate justice of our Supreme Court and President of the Philippine Constitutional Convention which wrote the Commonwealth Constitution, constitutes the first serious attempt by any responsible person anywhere to present a much debated question with anything like utter dispassion and comprehensiveness of documentation. It is an achievement in sober research on the most tragic and troublesome question of our time. The conclusions of the book are any intelligent reader's own responsibility and the Philippine Council, Institute of Pacific Relations, takes it in the nature of a public obligation to recommend a searching perusal of the work as a responsible means of understanding what happened in the Philippines during the nightmare which, on the record, is known as the Japanese Conquest and Occupation of the Philippines.

CONRADO BENITEZ

Chairman

Institute of Pacific Relations

Philippine Council

Manila, February 1, 1946

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Purpose and scope of this writing

THE end of the war against Japan has brought in its train a multitude of problems in the Philippines whose satisfactory solution calls for the clearest vision and highest statesmanship of the present leaders. Rehabilitation is, of course, the most immediate of these problems. But most ticklish and far-reaching in significance, because it affects the unity of the people, is the issue of collaboration. Upon how it is handled and solved shall in a great measure depend whether in many years to come the Filipinos will stand united or divided against themselves.

Since the return of the victorious Americans, a smear campaign has been conducted against the group of Filipinos to whom the legacy of leadership during the interlude of Japanese occupation was left by President Quezon. It cannot but be noted with satisfaction that the real heroes of the resistance movement have preserved their equanimity and have shown a true sense of understanding; but oddly enough, men who during the occupation stayed in hiding for fear of facing the invader, or, while remaining in political anonymity, engaged in profitable transactions even to the extent of trading with the enemy, came out upon the liberation and from their positions of power in which a new dispensation has placed them, fancying themselves the real liberators of their country, began hurling charges of treason indiscriminately against everyone who worked in the governments established here by the Japanese. Partisan sections of the local press, flushed with their newly recovered freedom, took up the cry which soon echoed in certain high official quarters in Washington.

So far only the accusers, the neo-patriots of post-liberation vintage, have made themselves overly heard. The accused, whisked upon military orders to a distant penal colony, could only ponder what they believed was an unjust incarceration. Their individual cases will be tried and decided by courts of justice, and except by defenses properly presented before those courts they would not wish to influence that decision.

But the public, here and in the United States, before which as a class they have been indicted and condemned for treasonable collaboration, is entitled to look at the other side of the question.

This book is not to plead in their behalf but to analyse, as dispassionately and objectively as possible, for a better and fuller understanding of the question of collaboration, certain facts and events which are within the knowledge of anyone who has followed conscientiously the recent and contemporary historical developments in the Far East, particularly Japan's policies in her relations with the Philippines and the other neighboring countries before and after Pearl Harbor and in the course of the Pacific war.

Because of their very nature the acts of the Filipino officials during the Japanese occupation pertaining to their respective departments and offices are not treated here, nor the individual efforts of some or most of them, whether in their official capacity or beyond it, to help and protect the people and to give aid and support to the resistance movement.

Matters which are known only to them and which, if revealed, would bring to light the circumstances surrounding many of their important actuations, are likewise excluded, although in a few instances they are given passing reference. Thus no discussion is made here of important facts in connection with the preparation of the constitution for the republic; the signing of the pact of alliance; the declaration of the existence of a state of war; the conscription of Filipino labor; the general attitude of most members of the Vargas and Laurel governments toward the KALIBAPI; their stern opposition to the organization of the MAKAPILIS and to the desire of the Japanese high command to have its heads included in the Laurel cabinet; the posting of military police guards at the homes and offices of the members of that cabinet shortly after the first bombing of Manila; the taking of the members of that cabinet, under military guard, to Baguio toward the end of the occupation; and the taking of Mr. Laurel and other Filipino officials to Japan, upon the withdrawal of General Yamashita's forces to their mountain hideouts.

Japan's blueprint of "East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere"

Students of oriental history are familiar with the complete Japanese program of conquest and domination prepared in advance for their Far Eastern adventure. Inspired by dreams of destiny characteristic of fanatical races, the Japanese had such confidence in their "divine mission" that they felt no hesitation in revealing to the world their pattern of empire. The actual beginnings of this divine consciousness are lost in the dim haze of the past. Perhaps the dubious victory won over Russia in 1905 gave it birth. Whatever started it, the process reached its crystallization in 1927, when Baron Tanaka put in black and white what theretofore had been but vague longings. In order to

conquer the world, said Tanaka in his famous memorial, Japan must first conquer China, and in order to conquer China she must first conquer Manchuria and Mongolia. Sooner or later, he continued, Japan would have to fight Soviet Russia, and one day she would have to clash with America.

This was Japan's article of faith so boldly expressed in the Tanaka memorial. Not long after, Manchuria was conquered and the puppet state of Manchukuo came into being.

At this point there was a slight revision in the Japanese plan. Until the early thirties the dream was avowedly one of world domination. In 1932 General Araki, then Minister of War, had it in mind when he said that the spirit of the Japanese nation was a thing that must be propagated over the seven seas and extended over the five continents, and that anything that might hinder its progress must be abolished, by force if necessary. The revision was obviously dictated by motives of prudence and expediency, for the ensuing trend of international events, in the shaping of which Japan had decided to take a hand, demanded that she present a concrete program which, on the surface at least, would appear attractive and workable in a world of fiercely divided loyalties. So the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere" was conceived.

In June 1940 Foreign Minister Arita crystallized this phase of Japan's foreign policy in a radio address that he delivered. It seems to be, he said, a most natural step that peoples closely related with one another geographically, culturally and economically should first form a sphere of their own for co-existence and co-prosperity and establish peace and order within that sphere. The countries of East Asia and the regions of the South Seas, according to him, are geographically, historically, racially and economically very closely related to one another, and the uniting of all these regions within a single sphere is a natural conclusion.

After referring to the need for a stabilizing force in the sphere, he calmly volunteered Japan for the role, declaring that the destiny of these regions—any development therein and any disposal thereof—is a matter of grave concern to Japan in view of her mission and responsibility as the stabilizing force in East Asia. Soon after, on July 23, 1940, Premier Konoye himself broadcast an address in the same vein, and said that in order to end the system under which Japan was dependent on other countries, it was important to forge close ties of economic cooperation with China and Manchukuo and "to further advance in the South Seas."

Admiral Sokichi Takahashi, in his work "Japan's Advance and the Southern Pacific," published in the same year, was even more explicit, and explained the meaning of the New Order in East Asia as an economic bloc with the linking of Japan, Manchukuo and China, and the inclusion in this bloc of all the southern Pacific region—Netherlands East Indies, French Indo-China, the Philippines and others.

All these were authorized official statements placing emphasis, so far, on the economic aspect of the co-prosperity idea. Statements by other prominent Japanese outside the government were, however, more comprehensive and of more far-reaching significance. Analysing the steps to be taken in organizing the sphere, Iwao F. Ayusawa, in July 1940, wrote that the nations in the sphere should *pool their sovereignties* and submit any dispute for settlement by the regional authority, meaning Japan; that *defence should be collectively organized and placed under the control of this regional authority*; and that plans should be worked out for *the collective economic life of the region*, including customs, currencies, banking, production, capital investments, exports and imports, migration and labor conditions. In August 1940, Kikomatsu Kawakami wrote that the "basic principles" for the establishment of Japan's "New World Order" were the following: "(1) Construction of blocs or regional empires by the powerful races; (2) *the granting of mutual autonomous independence to the weak and smaller races*; (3) a world peace based on an inter-bloc balance of power which will supersede the old racial or continental peace."

Blueprint translated into action

All items were thus minutely listed in the Japanese agenda even before the start of the Pacific War. The idea of a co-prosperity sphere among the countries of East Asia, divorced from the Japanese pattern of empire, is "morally unassailable." But everybody knew that the term "co-prosperity sphere", as the Japanese envisaged it, was an ironic misnomer, and that what Japan had really up her sleeve was to bring the countries that were geographically within the "sphere" under her iron heel politically, economically and in all other respects.

Manchukuo and the Nanking regime were then already an object lesson. It was not long before Siam and French Indo-China's turn came. Japan got her cue in their case by a border incident between the two countries in September 1940. Promptly Japan offered her good offices to mediate. How well Japan carried out her designs is graphically described in *Time* (February 10, 1941, p. 34) as follows:

The Japanese cruiser *Natori* steamed into Saigon harbor. Off the southeast Indo-Chinese coast appeared two Japanese aircraft carriers, two cruisers and two torpedo boats. Planes from the carriers cruised low over the city. At an appointed hour six French and six Thai delegates were taken aboard the *Natori*, where seven white-uniformed Japanese officers headed by the Chief of the Japanese Military Mission in Indo-China Major General Reishiro Sumita received them with bows and toothy smiles.

Tea was served; then the delegates prepared to mediate. Before either Thailand or Indo-China could present a claim or grievance, Japan handed both a bill for her services as mediator—to be paid in advance. She demanded: a virtual monopoly over

Indo-China's production of rice, rubber and coal; a free hand to exploit Indo-China's natural resources; military garrisons along the Chinese frontier; Japanese inspectors at all Indo-Chinese customs houses; a naval base at strategic Camranh Bay and defense concessions at Saigon; air bases throughout Indo-China. From Thailand she demanded a naval base in the Gulf of Siam for a fleet of 15 battleships, cruisers and auxiliary craft. Unless the terms were accepted on the spot, it was intimated, naval units would go into action and invasion of both countries would follow. The delegates signed.

As may be noted, the bill presented by Japan for her work as "mediator", and which, under the circumstances, Siam and Indo-China had to pay, converted them both into Japanese vassal states.

Japan was ready for the next kill in her expansionist program. Taking advantage of America's unpreparedness and Britain's pre-occupation in Europe, she stealthily attacked Pearl Harbor and in an incredibly short time overran the Philippines, Hong-Kong, British Malaya, Burma, Singapore, Guam, Wake, the East Indies and the small islands of Oceania. The geographical prerequisite of the co-prosperity sphere idea was realized.

The next move, which Japan lost no time in announcing, was to promise independence to the conquered peoples, even as she was consolidating her control over them. *For the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere was, according to the Japanese blueprint, to be composed of ostensibly independent states. "Independence" was to be the sugar coating to disguise the bitter pill inside.* But actually Japan deceived only herself. Neither the conquered countries, like the Philippines, nor the rest of the world ever took her at her word. However, the plan had to be carried out, backed by the inexorable might of Japan at the time and by the pigheaded cocksureness of her colonial administrators.

Independence of Philippines part of Japan's pre-existing well-laid out plan

It is against this backdrop that the independence forced on the Filipinos by Japan must be considered. It was a foregone conclusion that, without in any way relinquishing her firm hold and control over the Philippines, acquired by the right and circumstance of conquest and prompted by motives of avarice, Japan would establish here the semblance of an independent republic. This was essential to lend color and give authentic note to her propaganda scheme of "liberating" the Philippines from the Americans and accomplishing her new code of international morality embodied in the co-prosperity sphere idea.

At the same time Japan knew that she could not, even as mere propaganda, simply grant independence out of her unreciprocated avowals of benevolence and magnanimity. That would be much too altruistic and too transparent to be convincing. So she set a condition

precedent —that the Filipinos should first understand Japan's true intentions and collaborate with her to the fullest extent— and then, faced with the fact that the Filipinos continued to be as hostile as ever, she kept announcing to the world that the condition was being fulfilled.

Consequently, as early as January 21, 1942, scarcely three weeks after Manila was occupied, Tojo declared in a speech before the Diet that the Philippines would be granted "the honor of independence" provided that the condition already mentioned was met. This announcement was followed by voluminous propaganda handouts, consisting of statements by Japanese spokesmen and by prominent Filipinos, who were "requested" to make their comments. Not once did the Filipinos or their leaders ask for or even hint at independence. Nor, in fact, did they welcome it, coming, as it did, from the Japanese, and knowing that it was at best independence in name only.

But a "gift" from the master, masquerading as a "brother oriental", was not a thing to refuse. The officious character of the promise was evident from the fact that thousands of Filipino soldiers were even then shooting it out with the Japanese, and side by side with the Americans, in the battlefields of Bataan and Corregidor. It was an insult both to their intelligence and to their sensibilities to be offered independence at the time by the enemy.

As expressed in an editorial of the *Tribune*, then already a Japanese army organ, "the promise made by Tojo was made at a moment when there was no necessity for him or for the Japanese government to make any such offer; and that he made it then when he did not have to do so added more intensely to the strength and force of the policy of the Japanese empire towards the Philippines." The same paper in the same editorial then put this question to the Filipinos: "If, forty-four years ago, they accepted America's promise of independence, now that they find themselves in a similar situation, must they act differently?" Here was a threat, if worded as an offer. Could the Filipinos conceivably refuse it? But they knew that whether refused or not, independence was inevitable, since it was an essential part of the Japanese scheme for the establishment of the "Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere".

Military administration with Filipino participation—Quezon's last-minute instructions—Threatening proclamations of the Japanese Commander-in-Chief

ON January 2, 1942, the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Army issued a proclamation warning the inhabitants of the Philippines that "offering resistance or committing hostile acts against the Japanese forces in any manner, will lead the whole Philippines to ashes," and that those who "disturb the minds of the officials and the people" would be punished with death. On January 3, 1942, another proclamation was issued by the same commander-in-chief declaring the sovereignty of the United States over the Philippines completely terminated, and placing under martial law all the areas occupied by the Japanese army and establishing a military administration therein. The same proclamation enjoined "the authorities and people of the Commonwealth to sever their relations with the United States, to obey faithfully all commands of the Japanese army, to cooperate voluntarily (sic) with the army in its stationing and activities in the Philippines, and to supply to it all its military needs when demanded." It also directed "all public officials to remain in their present posts and to carry on their duties as before." It finally admonished "the people of the Commonwealth to understand the real intentions of the Japanese army and not to be deceived by United States and British propaganda, not to disturb public peace in any way and not to spread fabulous and wild rumors," warning that "such acts will be regarded as hostile and the offenders punished with death, according to martial law."

On January 23, 1942, a provisional Council of State was created. It was preceded by an expression of acquiescence on the part of the Filipino leaders to obey the orders of the Japanese forces—Avanceña, Unson, Aguinaldo (Emilio), Fernandez (Ramon), Madrigal, Roces (Alejandro), Yulo, Laurel, Aquino, Paredes, Alunan, Vargas, Sison, Bocobo, Quirino (Elpidio), Alas, Rodriguez (Eulogio), Baluyut, Marabut, Zulueta (Jose), Sabido, Mendoza, Veloso, Guinto, Lavides,

Tan (Dominator), Perez (Eugenio), Sanidad, Fabella, Arranz, Hernaez (Pedro), Recto. The only names missing were Quezon, Osmeña, Roxas, and Abad Santos, who were no longer in Manila at the time, having left with the retreating army of General MacArthur, and Sumulong and Gabaldon, who were ill at the time.

"In compliance with your advice," these leaders responded to the directive of the Japanese Commander-in-Chief, who had summoned them to his headquarters, "and having in mind the great ideals, the freedom and the happiness of our country, we are ready to obey to the best of our ability and within the means at our disposal the orders issued by the Imperial Japanese Forces *for the maintenance of peace and order and the promotion of the well-being of our people* under the Japanese Military Administration." "Consequently," they concluded, "we have constituted ourselves into a provisional Philippine Council of State and we are immediately proceeding to draft our Articles of Organization in line with Your Excellency's advice."

In reality it was no advice. It was an order emanating from no less an authority than the Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese army of occupation. And these Filipino leaders had to obey, pursuant to the proclamations of the said commander-in-chief, just as the inhabitants of a territory occupied by the United States Army would have to obey "at the peril of their lives" the orders of the American Commander-in-Chief, whose power in such occupied territory is "supreme and absolute", according to the U. S. Rules of Land Warfare. "They had no choice"—General Homma stated at the time he was apprehended in Tokyo upon orders of General MacArthur. Homma, it will be remembered, was the Japanese Commander-in-Chief in the Philippines when these Filipino leaders were summoned to serve under the Japanese military administration.

Order No. 1 of the Japanese commander was a highly personalized command addressed to Mr. Vargas directing him to proceed with the organization of the Executive Commission, to be composed of six departments, to carry out all the orders to be issued by the Japanese forces. To insure compliance with such orders it was directed that each department should have a Japanese adviser and Japanese assistant advisers.

But for most of the Filipino officials who took part in the organization of the Council of State or were appointed to the Commission the coercive nature of the military orders or the fear for their personal safety if they disobeyed the same was not the prime consideration that influenced their attitude. They were actuated, perhaps in a greater measure, by two other more important motives. In the first place, it was their desire, which they had already unequivocally expressed, to work *for the maintenance of peace and order and the promotion of the well-being and happiness of the people*. If to maintain peace and order is the right and the duty of an army of occupation under international law, "for the benefit of the inhabitants of the occupied territory, in order that the ordinary pursuits and business of society may not be