



# **WARTIME PHILIPPINES**

BY

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1950

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## P R E F A C E

This book was five years coming out. A number of vicissitudes, natural and unnatural, brought about the delay. It was due for publication abroad during the early days of Liberation, but one thing or another prevented its coming out. Locally it had been set up in types no less than three times. Again, some circumstances beyond human control, as the legalists would say it, intervened, delaying the publication by so many years.

This explanation is by way of apologizing for its lack of contemporaneity. It is to be hoped, however, that it shall find value even if only as a history of the parlous period.

It is not possible to make acknowledgments to all whom I am indebted to. The greater portion of this work, especially that which refers to the background of the war, is the result of readings into various sources prepared during the war itself. Since almost all the reference books in the National Library had been burned, a bibliography of the sources and reference materials cannot be made. I can only thus make a general statement of acknowledgment to all from whom I have borrowed ideas, data, and statements. They have my assurance that if it were only possible, I would only be too glad to single them out for proper payment.

To Jim E. Austria of the *Manila Times* and Pura Santillan-Castrencia of the Foreign Office I should like to say "thank you." The former edited, and very ably, almost the entire first part of this book; the latter gave me all the encouragement only she could give. But what is even more important is that, in helping me, they were not unaware of the risk they were taking.

THE AUTHOR

Manila, February 15, 1950.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
PART ONE	
BACKGROUND FOR WAR	
Chapter 1. Why's and Wherefore's .....	3
Chapter 2. Dream of Empire .....	12
Chapter 3. Sons of God .....	20
Chapter 4. Promised Land .....	26
Chapter 5. Haiun Maru .....	33
Chapter 6. Heel of Achilles .....	40

PART TWO	
WAR	
Chapter 7. December 8, 1941 .....	51
Chapter 8. Prelude to Disaster .....	60
Chapter 9. Open City .....	69
Chapter 10. Entry .....	74
Chapter 11. Martial Law .....	81
Chapter 12. Bataan .....	89
Chapter 13. Corregidor .....	110
Chapter 14. "March of Death" .....	121
Chapter 15. The Great Deceit .....	123
Chapter 16. Philippine Executive Commission .....	132
Chapter 17. The Butcher Recalled .....	140
Chapter 18. Formula for Utopia .....	149
Chapter 19. Japanizing the Philippines .....	160
Chapter 20. The Fight Begins .....	174
Chapter 21. "Independence with Honor" .....	137

PART THREE	
PUPPET REPUBLIC	
Chapter 22. "Promised Land" .....	197
Chapter 23. Jose Paciano Laurel .....	209

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 24. The Republic in Action .....	220
Chapter 25. The Tide Turns .....	233
Chapter 26. "I Have Returned" .....	240
Chapter 27. Doomed City .....	252

### PART FOUR LIBERATION

Chapter 28. Exile's Return .....	267
Chapter 29. The Witch Hunt .....	274
Chapter 30. An Institution Falls .....	278

**PART ONE**

**BACKGROUND FOR WAR**



## CHAPTER ONE

### WHY'S AND WHEREFORE'S

**I**T WAS a world seething with turmoil and deep in ferment. A madman's star was in ascendance in the West, and his quixotic dream of world domination plunged almost the entire land-mass of Europe into a conflict on a scale beyond any previous imagining. In the East the rising sun was on the orbit it had traced a million days in the past, but what once was the symbol of life and light had become the battle-sign of a nation grown avaricious by constant want and rash by easy victories.

The issues were clear: it was easy enough to draw lines. On one side ranged the forces of Darkness, the Nihilists bent on total destruction and who were in the year of Our Lord 1941 beating the drum for final victory; on the other were the forces of Light and Reason, the Christians who had the misfortune of being led by Munichmen and Appeasers but whose hope for victory was no less great for being so. There were only two sides to the conflict. At one time or another, this or that nation had to take this or that side. For it was a world, as Henderson had said, that was moving remorselessly across the stage of a Greek tragedy to its inevitable and disastrous end.

And thus: the year 1941, full of fears and dark forebodings, rolled towards its close in Nature's foreordained manner. Armageddon, many times forestalled, was written off the books: so comfortably close was the year to its end. But the gullible world reckoned without the principal weapon of the dictators. As in the West, victory was hoped to be attained in the East with treachery.

The kiss of death was administered early that fateful month in Washington, capital of Democracy. The Japanese Plenipotentiary Kurusu had flown across all of 10,000 miles of water and land to deliver it. When early morning of December 8, 1941, the murderer struck his blow, Kurusu was still flushing with the exhilaration of the kiss.

Object of the treachery was Pearl Harbor, Hawaii Base of the main Pacific Fleet and hub of American de-

fense in the East, its destruction, it was hoped, would neutralize American—and consequently Allied—strength in the Orient. The whole of Asia, including the South Sea islands, would then be at the feet of the Japanese warlords.

And the Japanese came to an inch of realizing Emperor Meiji's ambition. Pearl Harbor suffered such destruction that it was a long time before it was restored to its original power. During the while, island after island, country after country, had fallen into Japanese hands.

Of all American possessions in the East, the Philippines was the biggest and the most prized—and consequently suffered the worst damage. What happened to the Philippines from Pearl Harbor to the time she was redeemed from the vandal clutch of the invaders is the purpose of this book. But for a proper understanding of the war insofar as it concerned the United States, Japan and the Philippines, a study of the underlying factors in the conflict, however cursory, is necessary.

\* \* \* \*

**THE QUESTION** has often been asked: if the Stars and Stripes did not fly over the Philippines, would Japan have attacked the country? In other words, was the Philippines merely a buffer between two contending forces, situated as she was at the vortex of cross-currents? Or did she constitute a primary objective of the Japanese juggernaut?

If Japanese propaganda were to be believed, then the answer is plain. Japan went to war with America in the Philippines to drive away American imperialism. The place was of no import; the objective was all that mattered. It was the Philippines' misfortune to be in the way. But she need not have cause for grief; anyway, it was for her good that the battle was fought.

Shortly after the first bomb, Premier Tojo declared that "Our purpose in waging the present war is to crush the Anglo-American power in the Greater East Asia..." General Homma, C-in-C in the Philippine campaign, said:

"Japan's participation in the Greater East Asia War was motivated by the need to discipline the Anglo-American powers that have been heedless of high principle...."

From the highest warlord in Tokyo to the common myrmidon at the front, Japan's war aim was manifest: they were driving away Anglo-Saxon influence from the Far East. The Philippines figured only because she was under American domination, and painful though it be to the Japanese conscience, the Philippines had to be invaded.

A corollary to the first question then arises: Did Japan attack the Philippines merely for military reasons?

And here is where the facts differ from all the pronouncements of Japanese apologists. Because, for reasons other than military, the Philippines had always constituted a primary objective of the Japanese machine.

Japan had always been interested in the Philippines for two reasons: economic and strategic.

The facts of Japan's population problem and geographic position are very well known. Japan Proper had a population of over 72 million people (1938 figure), while her total area is approximately 1-1/5 times that of the Philippines. On account of her numerous mountains and peaks, Japan's arable area is very small, amounting to only about 15 per cent of her total land-mass.

Speaking less generally of conditions before the war, the density of population was 470 per square mile, compared to 95 in the Philippines. In the main island of Honshu and the southern islands of Kyushu and Shikoku, the population was piled up almost 3,000 deep on the square mile of food-producing land. Nowhere else in the world is there a bigger concentration of humanity upon arable land.\*

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\*Japan Proper has an area of 147,611 square miles, including the island of Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu, Hokkaido, Riukiu, and several smaller ones. The empire of Japan is composed of Japan Proper, Korea, Sakhalin, Formosa, and Pescadores, with an area of 260,602

Because of her lack of land, Japan was extremely poor. The average farm was only one acre per land-owner or about half a hectare. Rice was the chief agricultural crop for no other reason than that it was the heaviest cropper of all staple grains. Such was the want of tillable soil that nowhere else was such patience and perseverance exercised in the cultivation of plants, each shoot or stalk tended with the care given a flower. Not a single weed was allowed to grow in the farm-gardens, nothing thrown away as waste. The pressure of human hand on earth had worn through to the bedrock. Only the volcanoes had not been touched for obvious reasons.

Those who had no land engaged in home shop work or drifted to factories. Half of the population were thus employed, many of whom were women and children. But even the industries offered no salvation. A home worker got as low as 60 centavos a day, while a factory slave got only a few centavos more.

The poverty of the nation was reflected in her people. The average Japanese lived by the proverbial skin of his teeth. He had only the bare necessities of life, nothing more. His standard of living was ridiculously low. An ordinary meal consisted only of rice and fish, plus a little vegetable and thin soup once in a while. Even in hotels, the menu seldom varied. As a result of the lack of food, malnutrition and tuberculosis were prevalent.

The clothes of an average Japanese were of the cheapest kind, usually homespun. This was a curious fact because Japan had been outselling England and America in cotton and silk goods. The only explanation was that the Japanese at home could not afford to buy manufactured goods even at the producer's price. To cover their clothing deficiencies, the government prescribed long before the war the "proper" style for men and women.

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sq. m. and a population of 97,700,000—fourth most densely-populated nation in the world.

The Japanese homes were the apotheosis of simplicity and economy. They were made of cheap, light materials and, oftener than not, were bare of furniture. Homes that could not afford chairs and tables were hardly the places in which to find radios or refrigerators.

Young girls were sold to brothels or were mortgaged to factories where they worked in conditions that equaled slavery. The mill girls were a distinct contribution of the industries to Japanese society. The agricultural poverty of the country was such that a farm girl would do factory work for nothing at all. The girls, from 13 to 18, dressed alike, worked incredibly long hours and lived very drab lives in dormitories which were between a school and an orphanage. But life in a factory was such that one-third ran away in the first year, usually drifting to brothels. They contributed to Japanese moral laxity and the spread of social diseases.

Even Japanese thrift and industry have a limit. Just as one cannot go on being thrifty when there is nothing to exercise thrift on, so can one not go on being industrious when there is nothing to exercise industry on.

Japan had only one solution for her overgrowing population: emigration. But where to? Korea and Formosa were no less thickly populated than Japan proper. Besides, the Japanese could not hope to compete with labor in these places.

Before the war, Manchukuo and Brazil were the only countries receiving, if at all, Japanese emigration. But the Japanese did not go to Manchukuo in great numbers because Manchukuo's agricultural areas already had a density of population that did not allow further increase. Her climate is very severe, the growing season short. The country, add to that, had a standard of living much lower than in Japan proper.

Brazil was haven to the Japanese until shortly before World War II when, realizing that the emigres could not be absorbed, the Brazilian government put the clamp on the heretofore unregulated Japanese influx.

The only solution to the Japanese population problem was the sparsely populated areas south of Japan, in her "lifeline" so-called. And what could be a better place than *Collier's* "richest land on earth?"

The Philippines, with an area of 115,000 square miles, is only a fourth less than Japan. She has a density almost one-fifth of that of Japan. Her arable area is fully half of her total land-mass. Only a third of her cultivable area has been put to good use, leaving an uncultivated portion of over half a million square miles. Her total timber land is almost 70,000 square miles, containing the world's richest timber and forest products. If but a tenth of her people could be transferred to the Philippines, the population problem of Japan would be greatly ameliorated.

But if Japan was in great need of land, she was in greater need of raw materials. Her need especially for industrial raws—coal, oil, and iron—for her army, navy, and factories was nothing short of mortal.

The only raw materials Japan could claim she had in sufficient quantities were copper and sulphur. Coal and oil were found only in very little quantities, not even sufficient for a very sparing use at home. The smelting capacity of the Japanese pig iron industry required no less than four million and a half tons. This meant that, normally, an additional three million tons had to be found somewhere. War time needs must have easily raised the requirements several times.

Further, raw materials must not be limited to mean only minerals. Japan was also in chronic need of materials for her factories, such as cotton, wool, rubber, etc.,

which she could not produce herself. Japan's dependencies aggregated only a total of 30 per cent of her imports of these commodities. Japan had to secure these raws somewhere somehow to be able to keep her mills and factories going.

All these things that Japan needed she hoped to be able to fill by exploiting the Philippines, whose tremendous mineral wealth was—and is—still untapped and whose large uncultivated lands could be made to produce agriculture raws.

Also, Japan wanted markets for her manufactured goods, especially textiles. She had to have markets even if by force because if she did not have them, factories would have to shut down and millions would go hungry and perhaps die. Japan's one last prop as an industrialized nation was her overseas trade. Take away that prop and Japan would crumble like a house of cards.

It was naturally believed that the Philippines, a huge importer of manufactured commodities, should be within the yen rather than the dollar orbit. How tempting Philippine trade was is easily shown by statistics.

The total yearly trade of the Philippines averaged almost 600 million pesos. The import was about half the amount. Of the total, Japan's share was a negligible four per cent; of the import, the figure was three per cent.

But these figures tell only half the story. Japan could have monopolized the entire Philippine import trade. All of the import needs of the country could have been filled by Japan.

But aside from the strictly economic factor, there was still another force that drove Japan relentlessly toward the domination of the country, no less great a force to be sure: the strategic importance of the Philippines in the East. As former Chancellor Von Bulow once said: "The control

of the sea (in Asia) may rest on the question of who rules the Philippines."

For the group is situated in a peculiarly advantageous position. Nudged in between Oceania and the East Indies on the one hand and the Asiatic mainland on the other, the Philippine labyrinth "is placed like a reviewing stand before which all ships bound north to China must pass," as Willard Price phrased it. In the Japanese scheme of things, the Philippines was to be the hub of her gigantic dream of Empire.

\* \* \* \*

**V**IEWED FROM that background, therefore, the following facts become too obvious for repetition: that Japan attacked the Philippines because she needed land for her teeming millions; raw materials for her Army and Navy and mills and factories; buyers for her surplus goods; and because the Philippines occupied a strategic position vital to her dream of Asiatic empire.

Japan prepared to attack the Philippines long before the last war. Only the hopelessly benighted would refuse to see that. With her wide tract of uncultivated, fertile land, limitless natural resources and supply of raw materials, great market potentialities, and strategic importance—and more importantly, her defenselessness—the Philippines was a rich plum ripe for the picking.

The best evidence of Japan's designs on the Philippines was the Memorial which Baron Tanaka, as premier, submitted to the Japanese Emperor in 1927. The Memorial outlined the ambitious plan in Emperor Meiji's last will and testament calling for a policy of blood and iron.

Conquest of China was the first aim, that of the world the ultimate. But "we must first crush the United States just as in the past we had to fight in the Russo-Japanese war," Baron Tanaka wrote.

“Our first step is to conquer Formosa and the second step to annex Korea,” explained Tanaka. “Having completed both of these, the third step is to take and conquer Manchuria, Mongolia and China. When this is done, the rest of Asia including the South Sea islands will be at our feet.”

The Tanaka Memorial called for the prosecution of the above program in ten years. Japan attacked Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937, exactly ten years after the submission of the Memorial. How closely the last will of Emperor Meiji had been followed is altogether evident.