

The Undying Spirit of Bataan

America, says President Quezon, kept faith with his people.
That is the deep meaning of Bataan—'signpost for the future.'

By Manuel L. Quezon,
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WASHINGTON.

IN the last weeks they were an army of haggard, starved, feverish heroes. Their fight was ended. They had lost the battle. They had lost it to superior numbers, to superior equipment, to an enemy whose allies were tropical disease, and hunger, and utter fatigue. And so they surrendered, in the wilds of Bataan, to General Tomoyuki Yamashita.

That was a year ago this week. The world will not soon forget the story of Bataan. Other battles and other heroes may capture attention in a war that now rages from New Guinea to Russia and from China to North Africa, but the memory of Bataan will not down. There, in the Philippines, the American flag was hauled down, trampled upon by an arrogant aggressor.

At the same time, during the months of fighting, the world sensed a spirit hovering over that blood-stained peninsula—a spirit made of the ideals that move nations, and build lasting loyalties in the hearts of free men. It was the very spirit that, in the first place, inspired in humanity the ideals of freedom and democracy, and then, through generations of struggle, gave men the will to endure faggot and noose and firing-squad in order to bring

those dreams to practical realization.

As those who have been through the realities of battle know very well, men under fire do not talk much about ideals and principles. Such things are matters for those who try to explain why human beings were willing—even eager—to go through so much before the flesh refused to carry them any farther.

During the months that we spent in Corregidor, so close to Bataan, and undergoing our own simultaneous pounding, we came to understand a little of what the men on Bataan were facing every day. Even as the bombs were falling on Bataan they were also falling on Corregidor, and we saw our wounded and dead. Our food, like theirs, was scarce and bad. And yet, through the whole ordeal, we felt the clean fire in the souls of the men, from General MacArthur to the last and rawest private.

In the face of Douglas MacArthur there was never a flicker of fear. When the alert screamed and the Japanese planes soared overhead, he never scurried for shelter. He would stay outside the tunnel without even the protection of a helmet, till his work was done. On the first day of the bombing of Corregidor General MacArthur had his home and his office on "topside." He was working at his desk when the Japanese planes came. As the bombs dropped and the fragments fell dangerously close to him a young Filipino

soldier, his orderly, leaped to MacArthur's side, snatched off his own helmet and held it over the general's head. That soldier's hand and wrist were lacerated by the shrapnel. But the general had not been touched.

It surprised no one that the Americans in the Philippines fought bravely. Nor, I believe, was any one surprised by the fact that the Filipinos could fight bravely too. The significant thing was not that the Filipinos could fight, but that they did fight. A year after the fall of Bataan, as the war continues to spread everywhere, it is wise to examine this fact further.

When Japan attacked the Philippines she tried in every possible way to convince the Filipino people that she had no designs on them. She insisted that her only aim was to defeat the United States, to save "Asia for the Asiatics," to destroy the power of the white peoples. Her pamphlets and radio propaganda strove to split the Filipinos from the Americans. All to no avail. The whole country rose up against her.

There were not only military heroes. There were civilians—men like Benvenuto Bello, the director of a private college in Vigan, who was ordered by the Japanese to lower the American flag, although not the Filipino flag which was flying beside it, in front of his building. He refused, and the Japanese executed him.

MOST of the soldiers under MacArthur were not Americans. They were Filipinos—Filipinos from Luzon and Mindanao, from Negros and the Visayan Islands—men from the towns and farms and villages throughout the Philippines—men nurtured in freedom and trained for independence. For every American fighting man on Bataan there were seven Filipino soldiers by his side. To the American toll of 3,000 dead, we counted 20,000 Filipinos killed in action.

Why did the Filipinos fight? The answer should be told until it is known by heart the world over, until its lesson is applied wherever colonial peoples yearn for freedom. In a single sentence, the answer is this: The Filipinos fought because America had given them freedom.

When the American flag came to the Philippines above the guns of Admiral Dewey's fleet in 1898 neither the Filipino people nor the rest of the world believed that the United States intended ever to withdraw. The Filipinos demanded immediate independence. When this was refused they concluded that the Philippines had delivered itself of one foreign tyranny only to find itself burdened with another.

A fierce and tragic fight followed. It ended only when numerically superior American forces, better trained, better fed and better equipped, made further resistance impossible. But the Filipinos were not conquered by guns alone. Finally they began to realize the honest efforts of America to help them make progress in every field of human endeavor and, through trial and error, to achieve the democratic way of life.

PRESIDENT McKINLEY had declared: "The Philippines are ours, not to exploit but to develop, to civilize, to educate, to train in the science of self-government. This is the path of duty which we must follow or be recreant to a mighty trust committed to us."

Each American President after McKinley has said somewhat the same thing, in words of greater or less grace. During Wilson's administration Congress enacted the Jones Law, promising independence when a stable government could be established in the Philippines. Eighteen years

later, with President Roosevelt's recommendation, Congress kept the earlier pledge. The Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 gave the Filipino people an opportunity to write their own democratic constitution, establish the Commonwealth government, elect a President, and prepare the inauguration of the full-fledged Philippine Republic in 1946.

That was America's record in the Philippines. It is the secret of Bataan. The Filipinos fought for the American flag, when it was attacked, because they knew they were fighting for their own freedom. And the Filipinos are still fighting the Japanese everywhere in the Philippines. Broadcasts from Tokyo reveal this information when, now and then, they tell the world of executions of Filipinos en masse.

The forty-year record of American-Philippine collaboration is not merely an explanation of Bataan. It is a signpost for the future. For here, charted through trial and error, is the blueprint of the practical solution for working out the future destiny of dependent peoples after the war. Underlying the whole story of America in the Philippines is the promise of Filipino freedom made and kept.

THIS is the essence of the Atlantic Charter, to which the United Nations are pledged. A return to the outworn ways of imperialism will sooner or later plunge mankind into a world war. For the millions who yearn for liberty, it would make little difference who their masters are, if masters they must have. Dictatorships and democracies are all in the same category from the point of view of the subjugated people unless democracies mean to recognize their right to govern themselves.

Today in the Philippines my people are suffering from want, from sickness, from lack of everything they had prior to the invasion. Their wages have been reduced. There is vast unemployment. Free speech and a free press are things of the past. In what was once the best-informed Eastern nation there are now only the skimpy, censored newspapers printing falsehoods from Domei. Filipino eyes are on America and Filipino hopes are for deliverance. Filipinos remember what President Roosevelt told them while they were in the thick of the fight on Bataan:

"I give to the people of the Philippines my solemn pledge that their freedom will be redeemed and their independence established and protected. The entire resources in men and material of the United States stand behind that pledge."

The Filipinos are convinced that this pledge will be fulfilled. President Roosevelt has, in effect, already given the Philippines recognition as an independent nation. He has recognized our right to take part in the Pacific War Council, with Great Britain, China, The Netherlands and the self-governing Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

In the name of the Philippines, I am a signatory to the Atlantic Charter. We are one of the United Nations. And whether the war is ended before or after July 4, 1946, the date fixed for the establishment of the Philippine Republic, I am certain that we shall have our own representation in the Peace Conference. The only thing lacking is the formal establishment of the Philippine Republic, which will certainly take place as soon as the Filipinos have been freed from the clutches of the enemy and can exercise their full right to elect the officials of the government of the republic.

Moreover, by agreement between President Roosevelt and myself, studies are now being made for submission to Congress of the means to rehabilitate the Philippines economically and financially.

This is a real application of the Atlantic Charter, the unanimous statement of war aims by all the United Nations. It is the way in which the American people and the Filipino people can keep faith with the American and Filipino boys who died on Bataan and Corregidor.

