

Some Songs of the Guerrilla Movement in Panay and Negros

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Introduction

“The world will know
If history tells”

Thus did the Filipino guerrilla fighters voice their desire – for their countrymen and for the world – to recognize and remember their valiant effort during the Second World War. Military history does tell, but how many people are interested in reading names and serial numbers from army files and documents?

Luckily, their story comes alive in songs that recreate and dramatize the people’s struggle for freedom during the dark days of the Japanese Occupation – songs composed and sung by the guerrillas themselves.

They did not have time to write musical scores, but their patriotic impulse and their humanity must find immediate expression; so they dressed well-known compositions with their own lyrics. Because the tunes were popular, the songs were easily learned by all. A typical guerrilla song in this collection gives voice to common sentiments of love of country, and of pride and gratitude over being given the chance to prove that love. The songs are generally spontaneous and direct in expression and simple in form. They are true folk poetry.

Except for two songs, the writers are anonymous. In whatever language they were written and in whatever way – narrative, or lyric – the songs reflect feelings and experiences shared by all liberty-loving Filipinos in times of national crisis: patriotism, self-sacrifice, self-denial, involvement, agony over loss or humiliation or defeat, courage, triumph, and above all, the fierce and quiet pride of being Filipino.

In setting this discussion in its proper historical context, this writer decided to focus on the guerrillas from whose ranks the songs originated. This does not mean that she has overlooked, downgraded, or negated the meritorious and decisive contributions of civilians to the war effort. They were heroes and heroines in their own right. The role they played in the resistance movement was invaluable.

In this paper, the terms "guerrillas" and "resistance movement" are to be viewed within the framework of this definition quoted from "Counter Guerrilla Operations," *Field Manual No. 31-16* published by the Department of the Army, Washington 25, D.C. in December, 1963.

Guerrilla movement is "the armed combatant element of a resistance movement organized to conduct military or paramilitary operations in enemy-held or hostile territory by irregular, predominantly indigenous forces." Resistance movement, on the other hand, is "an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government or an occupying power."

Historical Background

World War II came to the Philippines on December 8, 1941, the same time that Pearl Harbor was attacked. Japanese fighter planes destroyed all ground installations and the only radar set of the Americans in Iba, Zambales and bombed Camp John Hay in Baguio and Clark Air Base in Pampanga. The destruction was so complete that it virtually wiped out the United States air supremacy in the Far East. The impact on the Filipinos was terrible. Once more, they were faced with external aggression and again their national survival was at stake. The cadets of the Philippine Military Academy and those of the Reserved Officers Training Corps (ROTC) in different colleges and universities were called to active military service. More than 14,000 cadets – young men in their teens and early twenties – answered the call to arms. To their disappointment, Gen. Douglas MacArthur ordered their disbandment on December 23, 1941 "to preserve the younger generation from the ravages of

war." Losing the opportunity to fight in Bataan, they returned to their hometowns and organized small bands of silent, swift-moving fighting men popularly known as guerrillas. Even before Gen. Jonathan Wainright surrendered to the Japanese Imperial Forces, some USAFFE¹ (United States Armed Forces in the Far East) men had already engaged in guerrilla warfare. Filipino and American soldiers and officers who refused to surrender after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor retreated to the mountains and organized guerrilla units. Some of them were Macario Peralta, Jr. in Panay, Salvador Abcede and Ernesto Mata in Negros, Ruperto Kangleon in Leyte, Harry Fenton and James Cushing in Cebu, Eleuterio Adevosos and Marcos Agustin in Manila and the surrounding Tagalog provinces, Wenceslao Vinzon in Camarines Norte, Roque Ablan in Ilocos Norte, and Salipada Pendatun and Gumbang Piang in Cotabato (Yap-Diangco 78-9). All these groups plus the fighting units of the Hukbalahap (Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon) of Central Luzon¹ were to become the potent combat arm of the resistance movement² against the Japanese.

In spite of Japanese efforts to win the support and loyalty of the Filipinos, more and more men and women joined the guerrillas. Peasants and small farmers became the backbone of the resistance movement. They fought side by side with college-bred sons of hacenderos. The rich and the poor were all fighting for a common cause — the liberation of the Philippines from the hands of the Japanese. With or without MacArthur's promise to return, they readily and unquestioningly offered themselves to the defense of their motherland. But for the guerrillas, the liberation of the Philippines would have been delayed by many months. Because of these guerrillas, the world witnessed a development of warfare unique in military history.

The names of thousands of these fighting men did not even find their way to the official roster of recognized guerrillas after the war, but their indomitable spirit of resistance is reflected in one of the most remarkable documents of the Pacific War. Their patriotism, their courage, their selfless sacrifice and faith found expression in the poems they wrote and in the songs they sang. For sing they did as they marched through thick forests,

when they gathered around campfires or while they were resting between enemy encounters. They sang on the mountain sides, by the rivers and streams and even in prison cells. Their songs reverberated in the lowlands. Mothers lulled their babies to sleep with guerrilla songs. Children walked through the streets of town and city whistling to the borrowed or original tunes of guerrilla songs.

These songs had the power to inspire men to acts of bravery, awaken dormant souls to action, ease the pain of loneliness in the jungles, sustain guerrilla prisoners in their cells, and even satisfy hunger and thirst. The writers of many of these songs remain unknown, but for whatever purpose they wrote their songs —whether to ease the tensions of war, win new recruits, or simply give vent to their feelings —one thing is evident: they have documented in song a part of our history which every Filipino should be proud of, that part of our national experience which brought out the best in the Filipino and which added more richness, more depth, and more color to our heritage of valor and heroism.

Songs from Panay and Negros

Throughout the Japanese occupation of Panay, guerillas coming out of their mountain retreats constantly raided enemy garrisons, ambushed troops and supply convoys and carried on intelligence work. The 6th Military District of Panay under the command of Lt. Col. Macario Peralta, Jr. was the first to contact MacArthur in his headquarters in Australia and furnish him with vital information on the enemy. In the face of enemy raids and atrocities, guerrilla soldiers found moral sustenance in their songs.

Ang Guerra (The War)

"*Ang Guerra*" is a ballad popular in many parts of Western Visayas. This was heard again and again from blind beggars in Bacolod during the early part of the Japanese occupation. The

events and places cited are historically accurate. It recounts a soldier's experience and how he felt about that experience.

1. Sang mil nueve cientos cuarenta'y uno
Bulan sang Diciembre, sang fecha ocho,
Ila guinbombahan ang tanan nga campo,
Madamong napierde mga aeroplano.
2. Ila guinbombahan ang campo Stosenberg
Ila guinbombahan isla Corregidor
Ila guinbombahan ang campo sa Nichols
Didto cag "idogfight" si Captain Villamor
3. Ila guinbombahan interior Cavite,
Ila guinbombahan ang campo sa Murphy
Ila guinbombahan William Fort Mckinley
Ciudad sang Manila naging "Open City."
4. Kag yadto nga oras wala pa cang Jesus
Ang bala sang canyon nagahinagunos
Bala sang "machine gun" nagakuruskurus
Con dili suwertehon, di ca capang Jesus.
5. Cag yadto nga oras cami nagretira
Provincia Pangasinan, banwa ni Alcala
Amon guindependehan segundo linea
Ang suba sang Agno, sa dugo nagapula.
6. Ang campo O'donel, mapag-on caayo
May rehas nga salsalon, may pader nga bato
May ura ugaling nga mga defecto
Culang sa pagcaon, walay aeroplano.
7. Ang amon ginkaon can-on nga pinawa
Bodega nga tangkong bisan asin wala
Daw macaluluoy con cami makakita
Dili mahibalan nagtulo ang luha.

1. In 1941
Month of December, the eighth day
All military camps were bombed
Many airplanes were destroyed.
2. Camp Stotsenburg was bombed;
Corregidor Island was bombed;
Camp Nichols was bombed;
There Captain Villamor had a dogfight.
3. Interior Cavite was bombed;
Camp Murphy was bombed;
William Fort McKinley was bombed;
The city of Manila became "Open City."
4. And at that hour before we could call on Jesus
Cannon shells kept wheezing past
Machine gun bullets were crisscrossing
If you were not lucky, you wouldn't have
time to Jesus.
5. And at that hour we retreated
To Pangasinan, town of Alcala
We were the second line of defense
The Agno river was red with blood.
6. Camp O'Donnell was well-fortified;
With bars of iron and wall of stone;
There were, however, many defects;
There was lack of food, there were no planes.
7. We ate rice not cleaned of its chaff
A warehouse of kangkong, with no salt even
How pitiful the sight was to us!
Without knowing it, we were shedding tears.

Ang Mga Soldado
(The Soldiers)

This is a song of the soldiers of Panay expressing sadness over their repressive life in the barracks and disappointment over the non-arrival of the promised American aid (Cuevas 72).

1. *Masubo matuod, nga wala'y angayan*
Cadre sang Napoleon sang army guinpuy-an
Libot na sing guardia, sakilid magtimbang
Cerado na ang guardia, cerado na ang
guardia nga walay angayan.
2. *Masubo nga tuod, nga wala guid angayan*
Cadre sang Napoleon sang army guinpuy-an
Libot na sing guardia, sa kilid magtimbang
Cerado may guardia, cerado na ang guardia
nga walay guid angayan.
3. *Oras nga maaga, ang army cay mabugtaw*
Ilinom sang cafe, cafe nga malasaw
Luha namon sa mata cay magsanaw sanaw
Bangud sadtong ayuda, bangud sadtong ayuda
nga wala binahaw banaw.
4. *Oras na maudtok ang army cay maglimpio,*
Pumas-an sang riple, may parada sa campio,
Primero terriente, sumunod sarahento
Ulihi guid ang privato, ulihi guid ang privato
may dala pa sa ulo.
1. How truly sad it is – really beyond compare
The barracks of Napoleon where the army lives
Surrounded by guards on all sides
Closely guarded, closely guarded beyond
compare.

Flores

2. How truly sad it is – really beyond compare
The barracks of Napoleon where the army lives
Surrounded by guards on all sides
Closely guarded, closely guarded really
beyond compare.
3. In the early hours, the army wakes up
We drink coffee, coffee that's almost all water
Our eyes become misty with tears
Because of that aid, because of that aid
there is no glimpse.
4. In the noon hours, the army cleans up
Shoulder your rifles, there is a camp parade
First, the lieutenant; next, the sergeant
Last comes the private, last comes the private
with a load on his head.

Cami Filipihon
(We're Filipinos)

This is a farewell song of young men going
off to war (Cuevas 75).

1. *Cami Filipinhon nga guardia national,*
Cami destinado sa patag awayan
Pananglit walay suerte, badlit capalaran,
Bangkay mapauli sa patag awayan.
2. *Mataas nga buki-amon ginalakbay*
Ulan, init, tun-og amon guinasulay,
Wala gunabale ini nga kabudlay
Agud maapihan ang aton hayahay.
3. *Adios guinicanan, adios cauturan*
Cami mapadulong sa patag awayan
Pananglit capalaran
Inyo nga duawon sa amon lulubngan.

1. We are Filipinos, guards of the nation
We are assigned to the battlefield
If we are without luck, marked by fate
Our corpses will return to the battlefield.

2. High mountains we traverse
To rain, heat, and night dew we expose
ourselves
We do not mind these hardships
So that we can fight for our flag.

3. Farewell, parent; farewell brothers and sisters
We are heading for the battlefields
It is our fate
Just visit our graves.

Negros is a boot-shaped island where fertile plains surround a long stretch of mountains. The Japanese occupied the plains and the guerrillas stayed in the highlands. Because of lack of a well-knit organization in the beginning the guerrilla units suffered from scarce supplies and poor communication with each other. They suffered proportionately more from Japanese attacks than they did on Panay, Samar, Mindanao, or even Luzon (Willoughby 512). The final emergence of Lt. Col. Salvador Abcede as the recognized Commander of the 7th Military District of Negros (by the Southwest Pacific Area Command) in late 1943 built up a strong coherent guerrilla organization which inflicted much damage on enemy installations, caused the failure of the Japanese to grow food and cotton in Northern Negros, and maintained an efficient intelligence network vital to the eventual takeover of the United States liberation forces.

The guerrillas composed songs in English which they usually sang to the tune of songs popular at that time. The three songs given here are included among the songs of the Hunters in Luzon (Mojica 623-31). This writer decided to check on the authenticity of this claim because these are the songs she learned from the guerrilla prisoners as early as 1943 — the same songs which she later sang to put her baby brother to sleep. How did these songs get into the Hunter's repertoire? Mojica himself

provided the answer (397-9). He related that Lt. Col Terry Adevosio, the commander of the Hunters, decided to contact Lt. Col. Abcede in Negros so that he could have a channel through which he could transmit intelligence reports to Gen. MacArthur's headquarters in the Southwest Pacific Area and so that the Hunters could have a share in supplies, arms, and propaganda materials which Panay and Negros guerrillas were receiving. Adevosio sent Lt. Col. Vicente Estacio and Lt. Col. Frisco San Juan to Negros in February 1944. Sailing in a *batel* from Batangas, they reached Bacolod in March, 1944, and stayed three months in the mountains of Negros. Then, in June 1944, he sent Maj. Gabriel Cruz to Abcede to deliver letters to be transmitted to MacArthur. Major Cruz returned to Manila in October, 1944. Any one of these three or all of them could have learned the songs and added them to repertoire of the Hunters.

Guerilla Serenade

This is sung to the tune of "Wine and Music." In an interview, Dr. Fernando Hofileña said that the lyrics of this song were written by his younger brother Cristobal, who, at the outbreak of the war was a high school student at Ateneo de Manila. He is now personnel manager of Viscom, a company in Bacolod.

Even without the tune, this is poetry simple and poignant. How beautifully and intensely he has depicted the guerrilla fighter, lonely, hungry and miserable, misunderstood but determined to fight for the liberation of his country.

From up the mountains
We view the low lands
Those lovely rolling plains
Which God has given us.

Though sadly staring
Our hearts are aching,
Wishing and waiting
For these dark days to pass.

We are not bandits,
We are not brigands,
We are just men
Desirous to be free
For though we suffer
And though we perish
Sweeter to us is death
Than slavery....

Chorus

If the hills could tell the story
They would speak of our privation
How we struggle with starvation
On this lonely mountain side.
How with scanty arms and weapons
We defy the naughty Nippons
How we groaned with cold and sickness
Everything to us denied.
Yet we laugh at all these hardships
We can sing away our troubles
We will carry on the struggle
Though we perish in the strife,
For we've decided and we're united
To fight for freedom and our way of life.

On October 14, 1943, The Philippine Puppet Republic was inaugurated with Jose P. Laurel as President. The Japanese implemented a policy of attraction and offered amnesty to all the guerrilla forces. But not all the propaganda and offers of peace could bring the Filipinos to the Japanese fold. Guerrilla raids were intensified. American infiltration increased and the resistance movement spread to other provinces. Their refusal echoes with scorn, pride, dignity, and challenges in the song.

You Told Us to Remember
(Tune: *No Se Por Que Te Quiero*)

You told us to surrender, Ye sons of the Rising Sun,
As if we had no honor, nor will to fire a gun,

Flores

You threaten us with murder, and frighten us with lies,
Saying you are the masters, of land and seas and skies;
Bomb every town and border, shell all the hills
and farms,

But we will not surrender, though blood flows thru
our arms.

We may be killed by thousands, but we don't cease
to fight,

Fighting always for freedom, on land and seas and skies.

There is freedom in the mountain side,

There is music in the hills,

Why should we give up liberty,

For doubtful gloomy peace?

We won't believe another word

From you sons of treachery,

But we will carry on the fight.

To win the Victory!

The third song with its snappy airs celebrates the coming
of American aid.

Aid Barrel Polka
(Tune: Beer Barrel Polka)

In the forests, by the hillside

We are gladly celebrating

For the aid we've been expecting

Is arriving, with more coming.

Tell the PCs, and the puppets

And the Jap collaborators

And the Filipino traitors

They had better change their minds.

Also tell this to the Japanese

They can come up anytime they please

That they had better pack and scam

Or they would be in quite a jam...

Chorus

Show them the carbines
Show them the chocolate bars
Show them the Thompson,
To prove our aid is not far.

Open the new "Life"
Spread out the "Free Philippines"
Get a pack of genuine Camels
And Lucky Strikes.

Show them the jackets,
That's partly olive and green
Show them the packets
Of good and new Medicine.

Show them the razor
It's time the faithless to warn
With the words of brave MacArthur
"I SHALL RETURN!"

The songs compiled for this paper are only a sampling of the hundreds of songs that remain to be discovered. They all share a common theme — patriotism. They are spontaneous expressions of men confronted by the reality of suffering and death but sustained by the thought that it was indeed glorious to suffer and die for freedom, for their beautiful land of majestic mountains, rolling hills, warm valleys and fertile plains — Filipinas.

By an act of speech, a man reveals his mind. Through the lyrics of a song, he opens his heart and bares his soul.

These songs must not die. They must be preserved as part of our folk literary heritage. They are a testament to the courage and heroism of thousands of men and women who gladly offered their lives for freedom and democracy.

NOTES

¹ Formally established on March 28, 1942 when Luis M. Taruc in his capacity as Chairman of the Military Committee of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas held a conference of the Party's leading commanders and organizers.

² Defined as "an organized effort by some portion of the civil population of a country to resist the legally established government, or an occupying power," in *Field Manual No. 31-36 Counterpart Guerrilla Operations* (Washington 25, D.C.: Department of the Army Headquarters, 1963), 2.

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