

CHAPTER XI

Back in the Macajalar Bay area of Mindanao Jap photo and reconnaissance planes were over us constantly at this time until we felt that every disposition and every machine gun had been so thoroughly photographed and every tree and bush so extensively mapped that the enemy was more familiar with our dispositions than we were.

Frequent raids by the Nip bombers necessitated our increasing attention to camouflage and forced drastic restrictions in personnel circulation. Motor vehicles moving on the few roads usually had to run the gauntlet of enemy strafing planes. The charred skeletons of vehicles, victims of hostile incendiary bullets, were not an uncommon sight.

Defense against enemy aircraft was, by explicit order, limited to passive measures. In other words, cover and camouflage were to be our only umbrella of protection. There was a reason for this. The precious supply of ammunition could not be wasted against hostile aircraft. It would take but a few machine guns directed against aircraft by green troops untrained in the conduct of anti-aircraft fire, to consume all our available ammunition in a matter of minutes. This ammunition had to be conserved for use against the eventual landing force.

While the Jap was assiduously engaged in developing his

aerial mosaic we were floundering about attempting to map our areas by slow and arduous topographical means. Repeated requests for aerial mapping had been passed on up to higher headquarters. The answer was always the same: "No volunteers to fly photographic missions". "Limited photographic supplies preclude the mission". "No serviceable plane available".

One Filipino air officer volunteered to fly such a mission, but his offer was rejected by higher authority.

The only maps available to us, and these in extremely limited quantities, were the old geodetic survey maps to scale of 1:500,000 and an occasional commercial oil company road map.

But to dwell on the shortage and inadequacy of maps is but to reemphasize the acute lack of military supplies and materials of all kinds so vital to the tasks at hand.

Medical stores were alarmingly low. The only morphine available to alleviate the pain of our wounded was a few tubes of crystals which, to be prepared for hypodermic use, must be dissolved in sterile water and stored in sterile, air-and-moisture-proof receptacles, all of which were non-existent. Battle wounds, as a result, were treated without the benediction of morphine. Quinine so vital to troops operating in malaria-infested regions, was not procurable even in quantities to provide reasonable prophylaxis, much less to subdue the many acutely infected cases to such degree as to enable the patients to return to combat duty. Casualties from this disease alone far outnumbered those from all other causes — unless desertion could be termed a casualty. All other medical

supplies were in critically short supply and the outlook for betterment of this condition was, and remained to the end, extremely discouraging.

So urgent did the need for quinine become that Father J. Franklin Ewing, S.J., of the Ateneo de Cagayan, set himself to the task of manufacturing this drug. Collecting the pitifully small amount of cinchona bark still available from the cinchona experimental plantation near Impalutao, this resourceful priest carried the bark to Dansalan, where he had found and established suitable machinery and the personnel for grinding it.

The next discouraging barrier to be hurdled in his manufacture of quinine sulphate was the supply of sulphuric acid. It was learned that an undetermined quantity of this item was available on the Island of Camiguin, some forty-odd miles across Macajalar Bay to the north of Cagayan. Father Ewing then set out by banca in search of the reported supply. He made the round trip successfully and brought with him a small amount of the acid. Enough for a beginning but far short of enough for production even on a rigidly restricted scale.

(Map # 1)

The efforts of this ingenuous priest to uncover ingredients for the manufacture of quinine, the experiments required to develop the technique to manufacture and the obstacles he overcame in this magnificent cause, are epic. He had perfected the process and was engaged in the production of this essential drug when the Japanese invaded Mindanao at Cotabato. The first lot of the drug was just

being completed on 1 May when Jap bombers, sweeping in at low altitude, wrecked the plant. However, the knowledge gained and the processes instituted were of inestimable value in combatting malaria among the guerrillas who were organized and took up the struggle after the capitulation of the regular forces.

Father J. Edward Haggerty, S.J., Rector of the Ateneo de Cagayan, with his characteristic energy, his extensive and diversified knowledge, and his exceptional organizing ability, undertook to bolster the almost non-existent supply of soap.

Materials were readily obtainable in unlimited quantity from the vast coconut groves which covered the coastal regions of north Mindanao and which had been untended since the Japanese invasion of Luzon. A factory was established near Gusa, the versatile coconut furnishing the fat, the lye and the fuel for the process of soap production. A considerable volume of good quality, white, coconut-oil soap was the result.

The greatest difficulty encountered in this endeavor was the personnel problem. Only the most intrepid of the natives could be enticed, even by the good Padre, to whom they were devoted, from their hide-outs in the mountains and from far back in the canyons, to work at this project. The least alarm -- a bomb dropped within hearing, or a rumor of Jap landings -- would send them racing back into the hills and up the gorges, leaving the fires and boiling pots to their own fate.

Commendation of the highest order is richly deserved by the

Jesuit Fathers of Mindanao for their steadfast loyalty, courage and unflinching faith in the face of humanity's circumambient fears. Their confidence, their generous hospitality and their sincere desire to serve endeared them more and more to our hearts and minds. No task was too small or too large to receive their serious consideration, sound advice and willing assistance. They allayed fear, exuded cheer and made life more comfortable in countless ways.

The story of these gallant Jesuits is a book in itself. A story which should be told by one whose talents may do justice to these heroic figures.

There was one thing we had in abundance throughout the campaign -- one thing of which there was no dearth: Rumors. Rumors both good and bad. Rumors which in the telling were plausible to anxious hearts. These were capsules of morale-building optimism. Likewise, rumors of disaster which secretly disturbed and discouraged, were discounted and scoffed at in open conversation, yet left their mark to some degree on the minds of most. Perhaps the greatest single quality of leadership at this time was the maintenance of good morale, so necessary to the attainment of esprit, discipline and unit excellence.

About the time the report of the arrival of the S. S. Coast Farmer at Anakan with needed supplies had been confirmed, there came a rumor, so powerful and so consonant with our prayers for

assistance from home, as to elicit widespread credence:

"A full division of American Negro troops, equipped and trained for battle, has landed somewhere on the east coast of Mindanao and is now enroute to the Macajalar area."

Plenty of purported eye-witnesses to this event were cited. None was ever interviewed. I was never able to have one brought before me. Our Division Commander knew nothing of it, but had heard the rumor. The Force Commander had not been advised.

This rumor was the most difficult of all to suppress but was finally accomplished by conference with selected Philippine Army officers and men, pointing out the extremely unlikely selection of the rugged Mindanao east coast as a landing point for American troops. There were no roads and certainly no access to the interior except by the most hazardous trails. Definitely the Commanding General of the Mindanao Force would have been advised.

While we could sometimes kill a rumor by the application of reason, it was a blessing that hope remained unquenchable.

Rarely did the enemy honor us with large bomber formations. It was customary to be harassed daily by small flights of fighters, and occasionally dive bombers traveling in pairs, sniping at targets of opportunity. It must have afforded the Jap an excellent proving ground for neophyte pilots, who could be sent on individual training missions to unloose their missiles on definite installations

with absolute impunity. In our imagination it must have furnished the Nip fly-boys much back-slapping amusement to announce to admiring fellows their skill and their kill.

To us it became damned monotonous. Damned aggravating that not one round of lethal acknowledgement could we speed in their direction, -- nothing but our fervent maledictions. What a satisfaction it would have been to shock those "sons of ----- heaven" into a sense of respect by a surprising and devastating hail of flak!

During the mid-morning of 20 February, the unmistakable, heavy drone of airplane engines beat on our inured senses. Realization suddenly dawned on us. This was no customary aerial visit.

Out of the north roared twenty-one silver bombers in perfect formation, flying so low that the hated red disk of Japan stood out in clear, mocking relief. Twenty-one there were, then suddenly one of the first V peeled off, trailing black smoke and losing altitude, and circled back to the north, finally disappearing into the haze over Macajalar Bay.

Malaybalay and its Camp Casisang had been marked for this air strike, and received a severe mauling. The brunt of the strike was borne by Camp Casisang, with considerable attention given to the brightly dressed lavanderas busily engaged in beating out the family laundry in the nearby river, and to a scattering of Filipino soldiers in swimming, contrary to standing orders. These people had been repeatedly warned against exposing themselves to air

(Map #10)

activity in this manner. This raid snuffed out the lives of some thirty people and started serious fires in the barrio and camp.

Tactically, the attack served the Jap no purpose. It did, however, serve to more indelibly impress on the native mind a lesson that no amount of warning and restrictions had been able to do -- to keep their drying laundry concealed and to stay out of the river during the bright daylight hours.

As the marauders disappeared in the distance Colonel Perry startled one of his Filipino officers with the remark, "C'mon now, everybody's had enough fun around here for one day. Get things moving!"

Some time later the literal-minded Filipino approached another American in bewilderment, his face a study in mixed emotions, with the serious query, "Colonel Perry think what happen here this morning FUN?"

Shortly after noon on 3 March, two slow-ungainly-looking Jap seaplanes circled lazily over the positions of the 61st Field Artillery on the beach. Great apprehension was felt by many of us because two of the few remaining inter-island ships were busily unloading supplies at the Bugo dock in an effort to make the return run to Cebu during darkness. How wonderful it would have been to hear the staccato bark of anti-aircraft guns! Or even to be permitted to open with our own two .50 caliber machine guns. But aside from the dry rustle of coconut fronds the only sound was the

menacing drone of the engines of our unfriendly visitors.

These two seaplanes had visited us almost daily since our arrival on Mindanao, but mostly devoted their attention to Del Monte Field, with an occasional calling card dropped on our front lines just to cheer us up.

We were not long in doubt this time. It was soon evident that the two ships were the target of this visit.

Opening their attack with a trial run of incendiary fire, the two planes then alternated their subsequent leisurely runs between bombing and machine-gun fire, flaunting their security in a cat-and-mouse game until, evidently, their ammunition was exhausted. With one final sweep to gloat over their handiwork they lumbered off over Bukidnon to the south, leaving the M/S Amelia aflame and listing heavily; the Bugo dock and two cargo trucks blazing furiously, but amazingly few casualties.

Colonel Melville Creusere and Captain Roy Gray cut the moorings of the M/S Augustina and succeeded in moving her away from the burning dock; and towing the blazing, sinking remains of the Amelia into open water where she soon disappeared below the surface.

After about half the dock had been consumed the flames were brought under control and extinguished. The Augustina again tied up to the remaining portion of the dock and unloading operations were resumed.

The peaceful tropical twilight settled over the scene and a

sense of relief came with approaching darkness, for Jap planes rarely called after night had fallen.

That evening everything seemed especially peaceful, in contrast with the excitement of the afternoon. There was no moon and the night was a black one, although the skies were star-studded. After a more thorough, perhaps, than merited, check of outposts and inspection of defenses, I succumbed earlier than usual to the temptation to relax on the comforting hardness of my bamboo bed. There was no struggle with Morpheus, and sleep -- deep sleep -- furnished escape from the discouragement that walked with us always during waking hours.

The unmistakable "CRACK" of heavy guns and the dull, rumbling thud of exploding shells snatched me back to reality. I reached for the flashlight, clumsily knocking it to the floor, where it eluded my searching fingers. The flashes from the guns flitted dimly through the darkness.

I found one shoe and got that on, groping blindly under the bed in a vain attempt to locate the other one. Finally, on all fours, with only the derriere protruding from under the bed, the recalcitrant shoe was recovered whence my startled feet had kicked it as they hit the floor.

I have thought since what a compromising position this might have seemed had I been discovered at that moment by one of my staff. The Regimental Commander under the bed in the thick of the bombardment!

Reports from the observation posts dispelled our concern about a surprise landing in the Macajalar sector. Nevertheless all battle stations were manned pending further verification of the objective of this gunfire.

Crackling flames mounting the sky over Bugo indicated the destruction to be expected. While hastening to the scene of the bombardment a few shells still whined overhead, exploding on the heights to the south, but upon arrival at Bugo firing had ceased.

A detachment under Johnny Woodbridge was already busily engaged in removing equipment and tools from the shops of the Philippine Packing Corporation's pineapple cannery, which was in imminent danger from the conflagration. The story on all tongues was of the Jap destroyer which, under cover of the heavy darkness, had slipped into the bay, thrown a searchlight on the Bugo dock, and proceeded to continue the destruction begun in the afternoon by the seaplanes. The Augustina, still tied to the pier, was methodically polished off. Several rounds were sent through the large oil storage tank and through the cannery, in which were stored several thousand cases of canned pineapple and pineapple juice.

When the destroyer vanished into the darkness it left the Augustina ablaze and sinking; the dock a gutted shambles of smoking timbers; the oil tank belching flame and dense black smoke into the night, accompanied by the rank smell of burning oil and blistering paint. From the damaged cannery the

pleasanter aroma of scorching pineapple stirred a fleeting memory, as incongruous as it was mouth-watering, of crisply-brown, juice-filled pies, bubbling over in a familiar kitchen oven.

The lurid light of the many fires silhouetted a scene of devastation and frenzied effort to save the remaining buildings in the compound. Casualties, again, were mercifully few.

Meanwhile in Zamboanga at Wilson's headquarters, reports by radio from offshore patrol launches during the evening of 1 March warned of the presence of seven enemy ships converging on the city from the directions of Davao, Jolo and from the north. Colonel Wilson's command, which had been operating under a 24-hour alert since January, rapidly took up assigned battle positions as commanders rechecked their dispositions, invasion orders and preparations. Outposts established at strategic points from Bolong to San Ramon were manned by troops from both the 1st Battalion 102nd and the Provisional 1st Battalion 106th, plus a few Constabulary soldiers. Captain R. D. Winne, who had only two days previously been designated engineer officer, put into execution planned demolitions and personally saw to the destruction of Pettit Barracks. Long before 3:25 AM when the first Jap shells fell into the blacked-out city all was in readiness.

(Maps #1,
#5)

The dark outlines of the ships loomed distinctly on the moonlit water, and it was apparent that preparations were being made for an immediate landing. Shortly, around the stern of

each transport small, speedy landing craft appeared. Obedient to orders the boats were permitted to approach the beach unopposed. When they were within close range of the shore the defending troops opened fire. Many of the boats apparently went out of control, some overturning, spewing their men into the sea. A few turned about and returned to the ships, not without casualties. Not a man reached shore alive.

Heavy fire from the convoy was immediately directed against the beaches and the entire water front, the big guns of the cruiser being particularly devastating at this point blank range. Multitudes of machine guns laced the night with rainbow-hued tracers; hundreds of signal rockets burst into showers of multi-colored stars. The ships' powerful searchlights illuminated the waterfront area to the brilliance of daylight. Lights blazing out on all the ships revealed them lined from stem to stern with hundreds of Nipponese flags, which struck terror to the hearts of the Mohammedan Moros and pagans aggregating perhaps two-thirds of the Zamboanga troops. Most of these had little or no education and their tribal lore abounded in superstition. Based on the fact that weeks earlier - in order to conserve ammunition - orders had been issued that there would be no firing at airplanes, these tribesmen had conceived the idea that the red ball insignia on the wings of Nip planes, on ships and on flags, now carried by the troops in the landing boats, were the eyes of many angry gods against whom their rifles could have no effect. It was therefore their duty

to seek safety and to conserve their ammunition - had not the commander said so?

The obvious intent of this Japanese "medicine show" - to bewilder and terrify the military in addition to the civil population of the city - succeeded wholly in the latter and most alarmingly in the former. Most of the men of the 102nd, whose morale had never been high since their transfer from their home province of Davao, broke and ran, the Constabulary treading on their heels. By four AM all units of these organizations had fled the area with the single exception of one rifle platoon of the 102nd, commanded by 2nd Lieut. Abdul Husin Uddin. This platoon remained in its assigned front line position in action until eight AM, when it was ordered to withdraw to prevent capture or annihilation.

At four AM a second landing attempt was made, which was also turned back with reported heavy losses by rifle fire from Uddin's platoon and the one battalion of the "schoolboy" 106th Infantry*. No further landing activities were launched before daylight.

Enemy shelling had started many large fires and our demolitions had, as usual, touched off additional unintentional conflagrations, with the result that by eight o'clock the entire waterfront appeared to be ablaze and a dense pall of smoke shrouded the city. Our supply ship in hiding at Masinlock, having arrived too shortly ahead of the enemy convoy to permit safe unloading of its sorely-needed cargo, was at the last moment fired to prevent its

*Composed almost wholly of highschool students and commanded by reserve officers who were largely former teachers. See page 94

capture by an approaching Jap destroyer. The captain and crew barely escaped with their lives as enemy planes accompanying the destroyer strafed the ship with machine guns.

At daylight the four seaplanes from the convoy had taken the air in reconnaissance, discovering immediately that the Pettit Barracks area had been abandoned. Whereupon they at once dispatched successive waves of small boats to the mouth of the Tamaga River, landing a sizeable force supported by tanks and mortars, unopposed except for long range fire from such of our troops as were still in position on the opposite bank. A flank attack from this Nip position necessitated the withdrawal of the remainder of our troops beyond the outskirts of the city. The enemy did not pursue.

On the morning of the third the line of defense lay in a rough crescent to the north of the city. Many of the companies had been weakened by desertions, especially in the Constabulary units and the 1st Battalion 102nd Infantry. These Davao troops whose period of training had been short and whose Filipino officers were conspicuously lacking in the necessary qualities of leadership, exhibited a pronounced distaste for fighting and dying for Zamboanga. The battalion of the 106th, in contrast, while far from being professional in its fighting proficiency, nevertheless gave good account of itself. Their esprit and morale were excellent and although they had received no more - if as much - training as the men from Davao, there was a relatively higher degree of loyalty and tenacity among both officers and men. Furthermore, being Zamboangans,

their personal stake in the outcome was greater.

Due to the untiring and ingenious efforts of Signal Corps Technical Sergeant Vivien E. Moore, and Mr. Moica, radio technician of the Bureau of Posts, radio and telephone communication between the various elements of the command had been maintained most efficiently.

Reports now came in of renewed enemy activity pointing towards an attempted penetration of our lines toward Pasananca. Since the extensive line held by the depleted Zamboanga force precluded any position in depth, such a penetration would split the force disastrously. Orders were accordingly issued for a withdrawal, during the night of 3-4 March, of the right flank troops to the left bank of the Tamaga River, where they would reinforce the troops already in position there. Accomplished without interference this maneuver sacrificed Wolfe Field but shortened and strengthened our lines.

Fires continued to rage in the city; enemy mortar and artillery shells were fired haphazardly over the area, and planes dropped an occasional bomb, but having gained his objective - control of the waterfront and airfield - the Nip now permitted the general situation to become static, rousing into vigorous action only when prodded by surprise raids by the Fil-Americans.

On 8 March orders were received from General Sharp directing the initiation of guerrilla warfare, requiring a further reshuffling of troops. Bolong, Curuan and Vitali - being vulnerable links in the line of communication as well as points of departure for the ultimate mountain positions - were occupied by the troops from the

second defense line. The Sector Command Post moved to Bunguao, joining the Quartermaster depot and the Station Hospital. The front line battalion however, was left in position for the purpose of shielding the move and creating the delusion of being confronted by the same force.

On the night of 10 March the sector executive, Major Lawrence F. Prichard, led a composite company of the 106th on a raid against the enemy's left flank. Successfully filtering his men undetected through the outposts, he attacked at close range with telling effect until stopped by the combined arms of the enemy. Although severely wounded by a shell fragment Prichard remained in command, executing a skillful withdrawal of his troops, having cost the Nip some thirty casualties. The following day, in cremation ceremonies, the Japs burned two solid blocks of buildings.

The rapid dwindling of food stocks was a cause for concern at this time and it was with considerable satisfaction that Colonel Wilson accepted the offices of two civilians who volunteered for service without pay, promptly assigning them to the food procurement detail. One was an American, Mr. Fleischmann, operator of the Curuan gold mines; the other, Mr. Go, a leading Chinese merchant of Zamboanga. Supplied with a motor launch, two barges and a Constabulary guard each, they combed the coast line from Vitali to Cotabato purchasing all available rice, corn, camotes, dried fish and canned goods. They traveled all rivers, sought out all barrios and streams, hunting and securing food. Even though they moved only

by night, many times they avoided capture by the constant Nip coastal patrols by a whisker. Marauding bands of Moros roaming these regions were an equal menace and with these the guard had several sharp encounters.

Frequent nuisance raids by the defenders harrassed the enemy during this period. About 20 March, climaxing elaborate preparations, a night raid was staged on the enemy outpost positions. Companies "C" and "D", 1st Battalion 106th, under the leadership of Major Jose D. Garcia, battalion commander, formed the main raiding party. One platoon of machine guns from the 1st Battalion 102nd, with the combined assignment of opening the attack and acting as decoy, was mounted at the edge of the Tamaga woods opposite the enemy's right flank, and trained on the enemy command post in the center of the city. To the right of the machine guns, behind a bank of the Tamaga river, were mounted twelve bamboo cannon to simulate the noise and flash of artillery fire. These cannon were manned by especially picked men under command of two excellent young Filipino officers, Lieutenants Allado and Cabral. To the left of the machine guns, as a protection for this decoy detachment, a rifle platoon of Company "B", 106th Infantry was stationed.

There was no moon but the stars were very bright as the various detachments crossed the Tamaga river and silently took up their assigned posts. The attack was to be opened at dawn by the machine guns. Garcia's troops however, discovering the enemy outpost line deserted and assuming that it had been withdrawn, had accordingly

pressed on toward the enemy front line. They were detected by Nip observers who promptly set off flares, illuminating the entire front. The machine guns at once opened fire, which was answered immediately by enemy heavy artillery. The machine guns were in action very briefly before retiring, according to plan, across the river. The battery of bamboo cannon, protected from flanking attempts by the rifle platoon on their left, continued to fire throughout the action, successfully holding the attention of the enemy artillery. Nip intelligence, usually quite accurate concerning all Mindanao dispositions, must have drawn a blank here.

It developed that the enemy outpost line instead of being withdrawn, had been advanced one kilometer to the front, so that our raiding parties had entered the area behind them. Apparently under the impression that their outpost was being attacked in force, Nip reinforcements were observed approaching in trucks along the Tamaga road, which was covered by a detachment of automatic rifles under Major Juan Crisologo. Clothed only in their white underwear the Japs presented perfect targets in the predawn darkness. Holding their fire until the trucks were in close range the automatic rifles caught them in enfilade, while the rifle platoons delivered heavy fire from the roadside. Casualties in the first two trucks were one hundred percent; in the third truck about half the men tumbled out and under command of an officer, hastily formed a skirmish line and returned the fire. A fourth vehicle, unloading out of range, added a few reinforcements. Caught in the cross-fire of

our rifle and automatic rifle platoons their casualties were heavy, and when the officer commanding was killed the few survivors turned tail and fled. It is doubtful if more than a dozen reached the safety of their own lines. The outpost line, meanwhile, had prudently retired posthaste down river.

Broadening daylight now revealed five enemy tanks in the distance on the road and believing that a large scale counter-attack was indicated Major Garcia began his withdrawal, covered by Company "D", under considerable enemy fire. Estimates placed hostile casualties in this brief action at more than 100 killed; our own losses were one killed and four wounded. By eight AM all of our troops had returned to their established positions. Again the enemy did not pursue.

The bamboo cannon group remained in action to the last, withdrawing with the rear guard, having succeeded in holding the attention of enemy artillery to such an extent that not a single shell from these weapons fell near the raiding infantry. Colonel Wilson is voluble in his praise for these men and their commanders who, understanding that they were unable to inflict any damage on the enemy and that their sole mission was to draw the destructive enemy fire away from their comrades, displayed heroism and gallantry in their action.

Perhaps the greatest gain from this sortie was its stimulating effect upon the morale of our troops upon seeing the much-vaunted enemy run from them, and - to quote Colonel Wilson - "run like hell, too!"

About a week later, employing similar tactics, the Constabulary company under command of Major Crisologo and accompanied by the Sector Surgeon, Major Tremaine, again raided the city. Decoy machine guns again drew a concentration of hostile fire, permitting the leading group of raiders to approach within spitting distance of the front lines without detection. The surprised and confused Nips scrambled in all directions like ants in a wrecked anthill, without opportunity to man their guns as the Filipinos fell upon them with rifle, bayonet and tommy guns.

Three machine gun positions and a large number of men were knocked out, the raiders advancing well into the city before being checked by an effective Jap machine gun net. Hostile rifles far outnumbering the Filipinos were now entering the action, making withdrawal expedient.

Caught in a cross-fire however, Major Tremaine, Crisologo and three soldiers, two of whom were brothers, were pinned down behind the courthouse. One of the soldiers, attempting to crawl to the rear of an attacking machine gun, was spotted by another gun crew and killed. His brother attempted to recover the body but was badly wounded and unable to proceed. A well-directed toss of the last remaining grenade by the third soldier - a Scout - silenced the menacing machine gun. In the pre-dawn darkness, Nip alertness having somewhat diminished, the little group made good their escape, carrying their wounded comrade.

In the Digos area during the latter part of February, when enemy activity had somewhat subsided, orders were received transferring the two battalions of the 103rd Infantry to the 102nd Division at Cagayan. This left on the Digos position after March 1 the 101st Infantry and a battalion of the 102nd Infantry at Miral in reserve.

Map #8

The line at this time lay in the form of a huge crescent. Its right outpost at Matinao held by a detachment under Lt. Booth; the northern extremity at Goma under Captain Abellana* had recently been temporarily dislodged from position by enemy thrusts. Reorganizing his detachment under Major Frandsen's direction, Abellana re-established his outpost near a tall tree from which part of the Jap position was visible to the observer. A telephone line was strung to the observation post and for a brief period slightly more accurate and detailed information was available.

About the middle of March a directive was sent down from Division indicating that the newly-organized Divisional Reconnaissance Troops would raid Jap bodegas and other installations near Padada on 16 March and ordering that a diversion be created by the 101st in the Digos area simultaneously. Some apprehension was felt that warning concerning the proposed attack had been received by the enemy due to the persistent circling of Jap reconnaissance planes during the preparatory period. Some bombs were dropped in the vicinity of Miral but no other action developed at this time.

In the late afternoon of the 16th the 1st Battalion, 101st

*Detachment from Major Richardson's 1st battalion, 101st Infantry.

Infantry assaulted the Jap's north flank, obedient to orders. The battalion on this occasion was provided with a large number of bamboo dynamite grenades which had been primed to ensure a quick light by having match heads pushed into the fuzes, and cigars were carried to serve as punk. The regiment's one mortar had also been brought up with some of its carefully-hoarded ammunition.

Throughout the afternoon and into the night heavy firing continued. Many wounded straggled back; their dead carried, bound by vines, on poles.

About dusk a runner from Major Richardson brought word to the Regimental Command Post that the battalion's advance had been stopped and all the slim reserve - one company - committed. Later in the evening Richardson himself returned to Headquarters with the disturbing report that contact had been lost with two of his companies and that the battalion executive officer was with one of these. Patrols sent out to re-establish contact had themselves become lost in the dense and Stygian jungle. The fire of our lone mortar had been a dismal failure - of the 24 rounds fired, 22 had been duds - deteriorated by years of storage in the mouldy tropical climate.

The Digos position had not been strongly held to begin with, and now with half a battalion apparently gone the outlook was grim. Frandsen's reserve battalion was alerted and ordered to move forward in support of Richardson's remnants the following morning.

Toward midnight voices sounded on the jungle trail near the Command Post. Part of the "lost" contingent was returning. A short

time later much laughter and commotion heralded the approach of the second company, who arrived in jubilant spirits, bearing Jap rifles, helmets and other souvenirs. Through the excited babble of the myriad dialects, one name - Pendugar - was discernible on all tongues. Our units were now all out of the forward areas and returned to their base, yet the firing up front continued undiminished.

The story, unfolded by Lt. Schultz, the battalion executive, to Major McGee, revealed that when contact with the battalion had been lost "C" Company had pushed forward, reaching the National Highway at a point where a patch of tall cogon grass covered a break in the jungle. Lt. Macauyag, the Company Commander, had formed the men into a hollow square with automatic rifles at the corners. Two runners had been dispatched to the right, where heavy firing was believed to indicate the remainder of the battalion. The runners did not return and the Japs soon located the little party and enveloped it.

Pendugar, it appeared, had recently been attached to "C" Company because both he and Macauyag were Lanao Moros. When it seemed certain that the Nips would breach the little square, Pendugar would rush over, a fanatic gleam in his eye, light and toss a bamboo grenade like one possessed. He was everywhere that day - outstanding even among men whose roster later showed a long list of citations for this day's action.

After dark Macauyag and Schultz had slipped back into the jungle with the men. Macauyag, swinging his bolo before him, felt his way when the foliage was too dense for the stars to be used as a

guide. The men, each grasping the belt of the man in front, were followed by Schultz who brought up the rear, keeping the wounded closed up.

"God had been good to us", says McGee.

The enemy, unaware of the withdrawal, carried on their mortar and machine gun fire throughout the night, Jap shells falling into Jap positions. While at Padada, the Division Reconnaissance Troop, gaining their objective, had succeeded in setting fires which resulted in the destruction of twenty-two bodegas.

During the latter part of March an epidemic of malaria reduced the effective strength of the 101st Infantry by seventy percent. The scanty supply of quinine was insufficient for proper treatment, to say nothing of prophylaxis, and the disease soon recurred, in some instances as many as seven times. Mosquito bars and head nets were contrived from all available material, and additional men were sent down from Division to cut grass near the springs and along the streams. There had been no rest for the regiment since December and beri-beri and dysentery were appearing also. On the 28th an acute attack of appendicitis sent Major McGee to the hospital at Impalutao and the command passed to Lt. Colonel Graves.

Shortly after Graves assumed command of the Digos sector the Headquarters Battalion 102nd Infantry and the 3rd Battalion 101st Field Artillery were attached to his command. These newly attached units required a shaking down period before they could be used in

combat.

Enemy action during the last of March and the first of April was confined to night raids on our outpost positions. Filipino patrols sent out to locate and destroy Jap observation and sniper posts encountered no hostile patrols, and contact was established only at the enemy's main position. Jap supply trucks on the main Digos highway were ambushed frequently during this period without casualties to our forces. Retaliation in full measure took place however, when on Good Friday, 3 April, enemy bombs rained on a crowded church at Miral.

About the middle of April the Division Commander, General Vachon, ordered another attack on the enemy's Digos positions near Kilometer 63, attaching to Colonel Graves' command for this action several additional units* as reinforcements and replacements for the malaria casualties.

The plan of attack called for the 1st Battalion 105th Infantry, moving in from the north flank at Kilometer 63, to cut off the enemy reinforcements. The 1st Battalion, 101st Infantry and 2nd Battalion 101st Field Artillery, armed with rifles, were to attack hills at Kilometer 68 and 66 from the south; while the 2nd Battalion, 101st Infantry - still at half strength from malaria - and the 3rd Battalion 101st Field Artillery, with the supporting fires of the artillery detachment were to pin the Jap to his position. The 3rd

*Second Battalion, 101st Field Artillery; 1st Battalion, 105th Infantry; and the Pinamaloy Artillery School detachment, consisting of two 2.95 guns and one 81 mm mortar, under the command of Major Paul D. Phillips.

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Battalion 101st Infantry was at Miral in reserve. The zero hour was set for 9:30 AM, 13 April.

When the three artillery pieces arrived on the position on the afternoon of the 12th it was found that there was no wire or radio available for the establishment of communication between the gun positions and observation, and insufficient time and equipment to institute a survey as a basis for a firing chart. The artillery therefore was blind and impotent.

The other elements of the attacking force accomplished little more than the artillery. The 1st Battalion 105th Infantry was ambushed and routed. The 1st Battalion, 101st Infantry, attacking the hill at Kilometer 68, halted by enemy fire was ordered back to the assembly area. The 2nd Battalion 101st Field Artillery did succeed in reaching its objective - the hill at Kilometer 66 - but was forced to retire under heavy artillery fire from the east. Strong combat patrols sent out from the two holding battalions failed to penetrate the enemy position.

By three o'clock on the afternoon of the 13th makeshift communications had been established from the observation post to the mortar, which then scored direct hits on an enemy mortar squad at Kilometer 68, a Jap trench system and a small building housing enemy troops - the only substantial accomplishment of the entire action.

Following this abortive effort the 2nd and 3rd battalions 101st Infantry were withdrawn to the vicinity of Aroman (see map #10) for

rest and reorganization; the 1st still remaining on the Digos position, reinforced by the 2nd Battalion 101st Field Artillery, recently moved in from the Cotabato sector which Lt. Colonel Russell Nelson garrisoned with fragments of three Philippine Army regiments and a few widely scattered companies of Constabulary troops.

While there were no major attacks by the enemy along the Digos positions during this period (14 to 27 April), intelligence reports of Nip reinforcements arriving at Davao were given emphasis by a gradual but steady increase of activity against our outposts and by larger and bolder night patrols than in the past, requiring ever greater vigilance on the part of our weary, malaria-ridden officers and men.

Van Nostrand's 31st Infantry in the vicinity of Hijo, meanwhile, having received a small increase in ammunition for the caliber .50 machine guns and 3-inch mortars, launched an attack against the Nip positions at Kilometer 62 north of Davao on 14 April. (Map #10). Fire was returned by both mortars and artillery pieces throughout the night, but without casualty in our forces. On the morning of the 15th, following this action, the regimental command post was advanced. The 1st Battalion was in contact with the enemy between Kilometers 65 and 63, and the regimental observation post near Kilometer 68 afforded a clear view of Davao Gulf in the direction of Davao City.

On 10 March a radio message, in code, was received at CPY -

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General Sharp's Headquarters - from Corregidor. It stated that a party of officers would arrive in Mindanao by PT boat the night of 12 March, and directed that Australia be contacted and the Air Force there instructed to provide planes for the transport of these officers to the south. The message was highly secret - only the immediate staff and the officers concerned being given the information - but no one who was aware of the message had any doubts as to the identity of at least one of the officers who was to arrive.

Morale at this time was at a low ebb. The long-awaited help had not arrived. Troops had been on half-rations for months. Ammunition was very low - medical supplies virtually nonexistent. It was felt that if it became generally known that MacArthur was leaving the Islands the effect might be disastrous. MacArthur was more than a man to the Filipinos - he was a symbol of the invincibility of American power in the Orient. The reasons behind his departure would be neither recognized nor appreciated, but the fact would be calamitous.

For this reason, native troops in the Macajalar Bay area were moved into new positions, some two or three miles inland, away from the docks, temporarily.

After dark on the night of the 12th, two trucks loaded with American soldiers were dispatched to points near the Cagayan docks and stationed in a coconut grove on guard. Several staff cars were parked in another grove nearby and General Sharp and Colonel Morse, the "reception committee", waited on the dock. Similar arrangements were carried out at Bugo, where Colonel Tarkington and Lt. Colonel

Lewis waited, since it was not known definitely at which point the boats would arrive.

The night passed uneventfully. Daylight came and still no sign of the PT boats. About an hour after daylight a roar was heard off to the northwest. It sounded like a flight of heavy bombers. Then around the point appeared two PT boats. As they neared the docks a tall figure was seen standing in the bow of the forward boat, the bright, tropical sun glinting on the gold-braided visor of his cap. There was only one cap like that in the Philippines!

The two little vessels slid gently up to the wharf - lines were thrown out and secured, and MacArthur stepped wearily ashore, followed by his staff. His face was pale, his eyes dark-circled with exhaustion, but his shoulders were square, his voice calm and strong as he spoke to the assembled crews of the two boats, commending them for their conduct during the voyage, which he pronounced "worthy of the highest traditions of the Navy"; and for their "devotion to duty, fortitude and example to be emulated by others".

With the arrival of the two boats natives had appeared like magic from the surrounding coconut groves and nearby buildings. During MacArthur's speech more Filipinos continued to arrive until at the conclusion a crowd was gathered on the wharf. Many of them knew him by sight, of old, but in any event his famous gold-visored cap would have made his identity plain. All hope of secrecy was now lost.

The staff cars were waiting on the wharf to transport MacArthur's party, but after seeing his wife and son safely into one of the cars

the General delayed his own departure to inspect the ruins of the warehouses on the docks, which had been bombed two nights before and were still smouldering.

It had been arranged for the MacArthur party to be quartered at the Del Monte pineapple plantation, some twenty miles from Cagayan, and about two miles from the Del Monte Airfield, to which the bombers from Australia would come. There in a little cottage, guarded constantly by vigilant American soldiers, the General and his family lived until the night of March 17, in safety. Although the daily Japanese straffings were continued, they were not intensified as had been anticipated. The news of MacArthur's presence had spread like wildfire throughout the Island, and must have been known to the Japs, but for some unknown reason they neglected their chance for a "Sunday punch".

On 17 March - St. Patrick's Day - three Fortresses of the 40th Reconnaissance Squadron, loaded to capacity with food and urgently-needed medicines, took off from northern Australia on the nearly two-thousand mile flight over enemy-controlled areas. Shortly before midnight they landed at Del Monte. The passengers were ready and waiting. The precious cargo of supplies was hastily unloaded, the meagre amount of baggage which the MacArthur party carried - amounting to about one suitcase apiece - was stowed aboard and the planes were preparing for a speedy departure when one of the motors on the General's Fortress coughed, died, and refused to start again.

While the crew worked frantically to remedy the defect, the

General very calmly left the plane and walked over to one of the officers standing nearby, smoking. "Have you another cigar? I left mine in my quarters back at the plantation." He was given the cigar and stood quietly talking, with General Sharp and a little group of officers, of the help with which he planned to return soon.

Suddenly the refractory motor roared into life, and MacArthur turned in a last salute to the friends he was leaving, with the words which were to ring a promise through the Islands for years - "I shall return!"

The plane rose slowly, circling the field, and disappeared in the direction of the Southern Cross.

For most of the men watching in the darkness that night it was truly a last good-bye. The return, when it came, was too late.

CHAPTER XII

The day after MacArthur's departure the Lilliputian motorship Katapunan arrived in Butuan from Cebu. Having discharged part of her cargo in this port she was proceeding a few days later to Bugo when a Japanese cruiser loomed on the horizon. Running for safety the little ship ducked into Villaneuva. Apparently the maneuver was detected. At any rate the enemy followed her into the bay, and under the threat of the cruiser's batteries a line was secured to the hapless Katapunan, whose crew had hightailed for shore and safety as the cruiser entered the bay. (Map #4)

102nd Division Headquarters having been informed of this enemy activity and apparent intentions, Colonel Morse came over from his command post and together we watched for a short time from a vantage point on the rim of the plateau.

Coincidentally a larger-than-usual flight of Jap planes circled the area. No doubt they were attracted by the rich naval prize which lay invitingly beneath them, but its Nipponese identity must have been readily established for they continued in the direction of Davao.

Force Headquarters, apprised of this brush with the Nip Navy, agreed to send aerial support to the doomed ship, but the Division Commander determined on further aggressive measures. Irish dander aroused and his military pride outraged at this utter scorn of

American power, Morse exploded, "My God! What are we standin' here for? Something's got to be done!"

"Tark! You get two .50 calibre machine guns and crews from your outfit and two from Johnny's, and you get over there and stop this foolishness!"

"Colonel Morse", I protested, "if we put every dam' machine gun on this beach over there -- even if we could get within range -- we couldn't possibly damage that cruiser!"

Morse's fury disdained this David and Goliath angle. "Well, do it anyway! I won't have those damn bastards thumbing their noses at us this way!"

Well, that was it. But it was a sure thing that with our first burst the Jap would cut loose with everything she had, and if she did there were going to be a lot of harmless civilians in the coastal barrios hurt.

Two of the 61st's machine guns on the beach were snatched out of their emplacements; two gun crews hastily recalled from their routine training and piled into trucks. Upon picking up the 81st's complement enroute, equipment was checked, the mission was explained and preliminary orders issued.

At the last moment the Division Commander came along to see the fun of four .50 calibre machine guns slugging it out with the fire power of a modern cruiser, and to do a little nose-thumbing himself.

Some argument had arisen during the period of observing this

little tragedy, as to whether this visitor was in fact an enemy. One of the American officers of the 81st Field Artillery was so optimistic that he volunteered to make a close-range investigation to prove his contention that it was an American man-o'-war. He came back ready to bet six month's pay on his opinion. "They're great big guys, I tell you! I saw 'em clearly. And they're definitely white!"

This opinion remained to be verified.

The one measly little manually-operated ferry across the Tagalcan River could take only one vehicle at a time. Epithets and maledictions probably delayed rather than speeded the river crossing but eventually, after a seemingly interminable stretch of time -- which was probably not over an hour or so -- our formidable force was assembled on the east bank of the river, ready to do battle.

The road to Villaneuva closely follows the shore line and the sea is visible from it for the most part. Reaching that point of the road where it bends sharply to the ^{east} ~~west~~ along the ^{south} ~~west~~ shore of Villaneuva Bay, the cruiser stood out in bold relief against the cyclorama of coconut palms. The vessel at this point was some three kilometers distant across the water. It was decided to unload vehicles and proceed on foot to select suitable concealed machine gun positions at more effective ranges. A reconnaissance party was pushed out and the portage of machine guns followed by hidden routes, since all movement on the road now

was fully visible from the decks of the warship.

As the guns were being unloaded from the trucks our promised air support zoomed over at a discreet distance from the enemy craft. This support consisted of one lone P-40. Under each wing had been improvised a rack for small fragmentation bombs. With all due credit to the pilot who flew this hopeless mission (the records do not reveal his name) failure was a foregone conclusion. The flight was probably ordered by Force Headquarters simply as a morale booster for the front line troops. Certainly taking into consideration the respect for the immense anti-aircraft wallop these vessels packed, this youngster did his damndest, not once but several times, to drop his puny bombs on her decks. A curtail of enemy flak thwarted each attempt our attacker made and as a consequence his two bombs fell harmlessly, one in the water and one in the outskirts of a small barrio about a mile distant from the intended victim. Our air support was last seen speeding in the direction of Del Monte. It did not return.

Three times the Jap tried to tow the Katapunan out to sea. Three times the hawser parted. The fourth attempt proved partially successful and before we had time to get into position she had slipped with the Katapunan beyond range of our weapons, where the tow again broke.

The Nip was frustrated also in his attempt to start the Diesels of his prize because her skipper had the forethought to throw the rocker-arms of the injector valves into the bay as the

crew fled ashore. The operation was finally abandoned by the Hips and the little cargo ship left adrift some five miles off-shore. It is still a mystery why she was not sunk either by scuttling or gunfire. This was the usual and expected procedure since the capture aborted.

The Kat was repaired through the skill of Mr. Jordan, an oil production engineer from Cebu*, who machined the required parts at the Philippine Packing Corporation's cannery shops. Under the direction of the Force Quartermaster, Colonel Creusere, she continued to render valiant coastwise service until she was dynamited by our forces at the Cagayan dock upon the invasion of this area on 3 May, to prevent her from falling for the second time into enemy hands.

When General MacArthur departed for Australia he advised General Sharp that President Quezon would be arriving soon and that every possible safeguard must be employed to protect him on Mindanao, and to expedite his evacuation. Accordingly, when information was received at CPY from General Fort, in Lanao, of the President's arrival at Dansalan, plans were immediately laid to provide guards along his route to Del Monte. Troops from Fort's Division would furnish the escort to the eastern boundary of their sector, where the 102nd Division would assume the responsibility.

(Map #3)

Due to various delays enroute, largely caused by the

* Mr. Jordan was later commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant, A.U.S.

President's illness which necessitated frequent pauses for rest, the Division Commander in Cagayan was informed that the party would not arrive in Cagayan until the night of 23 March. On that evening Colonel Morse with two truckloads of well armed American Air Corps troops waited at El Salvador, a barrio about 20 miles west of Cagayan, to meet the party and provide safe conduct to Del Monte.

(Map # 4)

The road at this point lies directly along the shore of Macajalar Bay. Japanese warcraft plied these waters constantly and blackout regulations were rigidly enforced. About midnight the waiting troops were startled to see a long line of brilliant automobile headlights appear around a curve in the road. This flagrant violation of existing regulations caused considerable concern, but fortunately there were no disastrous consequences.

When the cavalcade reached the waiting escort, it was revealed that His Excellency was not present. He had paused again to rest, and directed that the party proceed without him -- he would follow shortly. Another wait of at least half-an-hour ensued before a lone car, traveling very slowly, appeared, bearing the weary and irate President. Upon being greeted by Colonel Morse he commented volubly and at great length concerning the condition of the roads, the district engineer who was responsible for the maintenance of the roads, his efficiency and his ancestry, winding up with a demand that the man be brought to him forthwith in order that he might personally discharge him. Not another foot would the President move on such roads!

A heated discussion immediately arose between Quezon and his staff, most of whom realized the danger of the situation and the necessity for continuing. As voices were raised in dispute, the townspeople were aroused by the rumpus and flocked about. All hope of maintaining secrecy was lost. After further lengthy debate Quezon was finally prevailed upon to continue the trip, but issued strict orders that progress must be slow due to the extremely rough condition of the roads.

In due course Cagayan was reached, where the procession was again halted by Presidential order. Again the presence of the district engineer was demanded but, fortunately for that individual, his whereabouts were not known. Quezon then announced that he would spend the remainder of the night at the Bishop's palace in Cagayan, and resume his trip later. Father Edralin, the Vicar General, pastor of the cathedral at Cagayan, who was with the troops meeting the President, promptly informed him that Bishop Hayes was absent and that he had no authority to permit anyone to occupy the Bishop's palace in his absence.

"In that case", Quezon decided, "we will occupy the priest's quarters." Whereupon the good Father advised the President that, by Church law, no women could be permitted in his quarters, and exerted his persuasive powers to the utmost to urge the President to continue to Del Monte, as planned, where he could be properly cared for and protected.

At this point various other members of the party joined in

the argument and the uproar reached such a pitch that lights appeared in nearby houses, in violation of orders, and again townspeople gathered from all directions, characteristically joining in the argument.

His Excellency reiterated that he would not move further over such roads, intermittently continuing to demand the presence of the district engineer. Ultimately, after much pleading on the part of the staff, and many assurances that the roads were better from this point on, which was not entirely factual, the calvacade continued, arriving about 4 AM at Del Monte plantation.

Requests had been radioed to Australia for planes but they did not arrive until the night of 26 March. In the interim the President discussed the Philippine situation with the Commanding General and other officers of the Mindanao Force, expressing considerable bitterness towards the Administration for its failure to support the Philippine Government, while sending troops and great quantities of war material to Europe. He said that since the Philippine Islands were American territory that the first consideration of the Government should properly be toward its own, and that only a PART of the force being sent to Europe would be sufficient to hold the Japs at bay, but that due to the influence of Churchill the government had concluded to abandon the Islands.

He was most reluctant to desert his people. He had been

President for many years, and felt that he had not long to live, but believed that if he could visit the States he might prevail upon the Administration to give more consideration to its own territorial interests. Officers who talked with him during this period were much impressed by his sincerity, statesmanship and patriotism.

On the night of 26 March three B-17's arrived at Del Monte from Darwin. These planes safely landed the Quezon party in Australia.

In spite of his successful escape the President had apparently not forgotten his anger at General Chynoweth, however, for some time later the General received an urgent radiogram from higher headquarters demanding to know why he had "insulted" the President of the Philippines and "ordered him off the Island of Negros"! It must be remembered, however, that Quezon was, during this entire period, a seriously ill man and consequently much more irritable and critical than he would normally have been. At any rate, General Chynoweth was relieved to learn that His Excellency's escape had been successfully accomplished and doubly thankful that he had not carried out his original intention of establishing himself on Cebu, where it would have been impossible to protect him.

Father Edralin, who later became Chaplain of the 102nd Division, had always been most hospitable and had many times

generously offered the use of the shower baths at the convento in Cagayan. Perhaps he felt that if he couldn't cleanse our souls he could at least make the cleansing of our bodies more easily and comfortably accomplished. These offers we accepted as often as our duties permitted. But for the most part our bathing was restricted to the tumbling river which swept past our command post, with rather dire consequences, since Lewis and I both fell victim to severe and stubborn water-borne parasitic infection. Buck became a mass of itching, inflamed sores which kept him in agony for several weeks - my case, though lighter, was nevertheless uncomfortable.

About 5 April the good Father invited Buck and me to dinner at his convento. We were agreeably surprised, upon arriving, to find General Sharp, Colonel Morse, Colonel Killen, Johnnie Woodbridge and Joe Webb also there. We had supposed that Father Edralin, in passing through our area, had invited Lewis and me to break bread with him as a respite from our usual unattractive fare. It developed now that this was a promotion party for General Sharp, primarily, and myself -- these promotions having been made via radio from Corregidor 2 April '42.

Congratulating General Sharp upon his promotion to Major General, he stated that Douglas MacArthur had promised him this second star during his (MacArthur's) stay in Mindanao enroute from Corregidor to Australia.

From an excellent aperitif, to nuts, Father Edralin did himself proud "pour arroser nos galons".

Unable to procure the insignia of my own advanced rank from any readily available stocks on the Island, Father Haggerty, of the Ateneo de Cagayan, undertook to locate a silversmith whom he knew in the vicinity. In about a week he presented me with a beautiful pair of eagles wrought of coin silver by Luis Dacer. These eagles are the only material memento of these times in my possession today. I never wear them without thinking of the many kindnesses of the Mindanao priests - without reflecting a little on the grotesque situation which confronted us during those trying times - a situation which lingers dimly in the memory as a bad dream that one strives to forget.

The tragic announcement of the fall of embattled Bataan brought into sharper relief the rising tide of misfortune which was sweeping the Islands. That so epic a struggle against overwhelming odds should have ended in disaster brought tears to the eyes of strong men. Our Tagalog officers wept with concern for the families and loved ones on Luzon. Some of our soldiers gave way to despair and lost heart for further resistance; with others there was a noticeable intensification of desire for vengeance - somehow - somewhere.

The following day, hard on the heels of the Bataan disaster came the news of the invasion of Cebu. The crest of the hostile tide would soon reach Panay and Mindanao. There was nothing to do but prepare and wait. All defensive measures must be checked

and double-checked. There was work for all - still more than could be accomplished in the remaining time. This in itself proved a blessing since it permitted no time to dwell on a discouraging outlook. All mental and physical faculties had to be bent and sharpened to meet the imminent encounter with the "sons of heaven".

But the human mind is ever ready to grasp at the slightest gleam of hope. This gleam materialized in the form of Brigadier General Ralph Royce's bomber group from Australia, which came into Mindanao on 11 April.

Flying over Cagayan and over the Command Post of the 61st Field Artillery, with the white star of the United States clearly distinguishable, three Fortresses (B-17s) winged their way toward Del Monte Air Field just at dusk - and as darkness settled ten B-25s followed at short intervals, silhouetted against a star-lit sky -- with their red and green running lights burning. What a sight! This was the greatest friendly air potential we had seen since the outbreak of war.

It is difficult to describe the emotional surges generated by that inspiring spectacle. In spite of the knowledge that only a pittance of aviation fuel was available on Mindanao, and scarcely more in the way of a bomb supply, it was hoped and maintained sturdily by the more sanguine that this was but a forerunner of continuing and increasing assistance to be poured into Mindanao.

It was generally accepted by at least one military school of thought that Mindanao should have been the base of American

resistance and effort in the Archipelago - that Mindanao with its many resources, lying closer to our lines of communication and supply with the United States, with its excellent sites for protected air fields, with fair harbors and other military features, afforded better characteristics for a military stronghold and subsequent springboard for operations against Japan.

Nevertheless it was exhilarating to know that at least one air strike against Japan in our area was in the offing. The happiest result of this event was the lift to the sagging morale and esprit of the troops. It was and had been a trying ordeal waiting -- and daily expecting the final showdown, with no display of the modern armed might of America. There were many who persistently clung to the contention that the Philippines, over which the American Flag had flown and still flew, was a needless sacrifice on the altar of our war effort. Be that as it may. In the light of the inadequate and untimely provision for the defense of the Islands, there could have been no other strategy employed to guarantee a successful conclusion to this global war of ideologies.

Before daylight of the following morning these bombers, in smaller groups, had flown northward on their several missions.