

JAPANESE CULTURAL PROPAGANDA IN THE PHILIPPINES

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On January 2, 1942 when Manila fell into Japanese hands, the existing political parties under the Commonwealth were immediately dissolved, and an educational campaign in the occupied areas was launched. Believing that culture could serve to compliment military might, the Japanese enlisted the help of political commentators, educators and writers from Japan and sent them to the Philippines to purge the people of the thoughts originating from "enemy countries."¹ Newspapers and other publications were mobilized to maintain internal solidarity and unity. "In all the speeches and short talks which the Japanese officials in the military and civil establishments delivered on practically all occasions — the opening of a school, interviews, gathering of peasants, etc. — the dominant ideas were the 'building of a New Philippines', the 'development of a truly Oriental culture', and the 'doing away with American influences and way of life.'"²

The initial military victories of 1941 and 1942 must have given the Japanese confidence in the strength of their moral philosophy. They thought it was strong enough to defy "the shallow, materialistic approach of the Anglo-American."³ They counseled the people to follow Japan and be guided equally by strong moral and political ideals.⁴

¹ Yasotaro Mori, "Nippon's Cultural Strength," *Pillars*, II (May, 1944), 52.

² Agoncillo, *Fateful Years*, vol. I, p.366.

³ Mori, "For A More Spheric Consciousness," *Pillars*, II (May, 1944), 3-7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

General Masaharu Homma, in a speech after the seizure of Manila, exhorted the Philippines to "liquidate the unnatural culture borrowed from a far away country."⁵ He stressed that "a nation which indulged in pretty dresses, nice food, physical enjoyment and expensive fashions could not succeed in establishing a strong nation."⁶

Roots of subservience

It did not take the Japanese long to realize that the Filipinos' cultural and economic dependency on the United States was in a far worse state than they had imagined. They were appalled by the Filipinos' slave-like reverence and dependency on imported materials. They were shocked by the Filipino standard of living which was "measured in terms of sleek motor cars and electric refrigerators, neither of which was produced in the country."⁷ They could not understand why the Filipinos would "always hark back to the pre-war era to lament, not its colonial status but in recalling its artificial prosperity and the imported foods."⁸ They wondered how a nation could take pride in speaking foreign languages rather than their own; or even remain as a nation with a national economy which they described as "standing on a precarious foundation of a foreign trade that could be relied upon to be as stable as the shifting sands of the Sahara."⁹

Looking into Philippine history, they discovered that the country had no culture nor racial identity of her own. They surmised that this cultural deprivation was due to the years of Spanish and American impositions in the Islands. They seized upon the weight of argument to launch an ambitious program, taking upon themselves the heroic task of liberating the people from Western economic domination and rekindling the flame of nationalism which they stretched to the regional level, embracing not only the Philippines and Japan, but the entire East Asian countries as well.

The Japanese also looked into the "unnatural attachment of the people to the United States," tracing its cause to the people's general "feeling of inferiority."¹⁰

⁵ Quotations from *Journal of the Japanese Military Administration*, 2 (1942, V-VI).

⁶ S. Motukawa, "A Hospital Visit," *Philippine Review*, II (May, 1944), p. 21.

⁷ S. Motukawa, "A Hospital Visit," *Philippine Review* II (May, 1944),

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ S. Matukawa, "The Filipino Reorientation Made Easy," *Pillars*, I (February, 1944), p. 23.

... the Filipinos were wont to turn their eyes away from the Orient because they saw the Orient as the slum of the world and felt that embarrassing to be considered a part of it. Consequently, their feeling toward other Oriental peoples was like the universal attitude people feel toward poor relations.¹¹

The Japanese administrator urged the people to regain their self-confidence, deducing the Filipino feeling of inferiority from America's policy of deceit and misguidance.¹² In a lecture commemorating the fall of Bataan, General Yoshihide said that "the United States had sapped Filipino strength with luxury goods, scattered their energies by excessive encouragement of individual rights, and handicapped their future by not building enough vocational schools."¹³

Southeast Asia possesses world control of rubber and tin; one fourth of the world's tungsten and antimony, the greatest exporter of rice, the world's control of copra and coconut oil; the largest chromite deposit and the sixth gold producer of the world.

America Unmasked

A Japanese writer confessed that "the only real element of poverty (in the Philippines) is the poverty of the people's will to develop their country's economy."¹⁴

Although they gave the American credit for the general improvement of the islands, the Japanese explained that the high standard of living was a natural result of a period of industrialization, not a humanitarian act towards the Filipino people. They claimed this was a general trend throughout the world since the close of the 19th century.¹⁵

They denounced America's colonial objectives in the islands, from her interference in the Spanish-Philippine War of 1898 to the sacrifice of Filipino lives in Bataan and Corregidor. They exposed what they claimed was America's organized effort to transform the Philippines into a dependent colony, both politically and economically, so that she would remain an indispensable part of her vast program of Oriental expansion.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹² This is an often repeated advice by officers of the Japanese Military Administration, especially by Major Gen. Hayashi Yoshihide, 1st Director General of the JMA.

¹³ Hayashi Yoshihide, as quoted in Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires* (London: 1965), p. 231.

¹⁴ S. Matukawa, "Filipino Reorientation Made Easy," *Pillars*, I (February, 1944), 24.

¹⁵ T. F. Ito, "America's Altruism in the Philippines," *Philippine Review*, II (May, 1944), p. 38.

A Japanese writer, T. F. Ito¹⁶, gave an explanation of America's supposed modernization of the Philippines which would later become an often repeated argument during the post-war disillusionment of the Filipinos with American colonial policies. Ito wrote that the sweeping change in the political, social and economic institutions after the establishment of the civil government in 1901 was no more than "a prelude to the Americanization of the natives."¹⁷ He added:

Under the banner of altruism, the doctrine of democracy was nominally introduced; then a shallow but dazzling materialistic civilization was brought in, followed naturally by American mannerisms and tastes.¹⁸

Mr. Ito continued to explain that the materialistic civilization introduced in the Philippines which America announced to the world as an act of goodwill, was really no more than a plan to develop a new and exclusive market for the products of her industries.

Masao Matsuoka, another Japanese writer, also maintained that the industrial revolution which swept Europe from the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries had increased the production of goods which resulted in a desperate need to seek new markets for these goods. American efforts to acquire the Philippines from Spain was motivated by America's search for new markets for surplus goods. These goods were dumped in the Islands under the guise of America's contribution to the modernization of the Philippines.¹⁹

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, when confronted on several occasions with questions to explain her position in the Philippines, America had managed to prove her absence of any commercial or economic designs by citing the unfavorable balance of trade with the Islands, and also by presenting in figures the enormous expenditures she incurred to maintain the Philippines. But the Japanese refuted this contention. They said:²⁰

As far as the visible items were concerned, this claim was correct. But the truth was that Uncle Sam's profits which were derived out of non-visible items such as insurance premiums, freight charges, interests and bonds and debentures, etc. were more than enough to offset the losses in the visible items.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-44.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Masao Matsuoka, "Japanese Colonial Administration," *Philippine Review*, I (June, 1943), 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

As for America's constant reference to the enormous expenditures she had made for administrative purposes and defense of the territorial integrity of the Philippines, and which she claimed to be no less than \$30,000,000 per annum, the Japanese disclosed the truth of this matter.

On the face of it, these appear to be rational arguments. But, the American policy towards the Philippines was not as simple as that; it was much more deeply rooted... America had and still has in mind a sinister objective — the domination of the entire Far East which abounds in economic potentialities. In fact, to America the Orient was and is synonymous to an inexhaustible gold mine. So long as she could reign over the Orient, she would be at liberty to exploit countries through trade monopoly, an arrangement which would amply compensate his losses in the Philippines. The Philippines was an important outpost from which this tentacle of imperialistic exploitation would surreptitiously stretch to the Asiatic mainland. Therefore, so long as the Filipinos could be put 'in the bag' to serve their purpose Uncle Sam was always ready to spend any amount.²¹

Summarizing America's economic interests in Asia, the Japanese maintained that it was the intention of America to make the Philippines and other Asian countries remain and subsist on agricultural economy so that Great Britain and the United States would continue to maintain their economic interests in Asia. Asian countries would continue to provide the much-needed raw materials for Western power which would in turn transform them into manufactured goods to be exported back to the same countries whence the materials had been acquired. The trade relation, so economically disastrous to agricultural countries, was made to appear advantageous to both parties, and was frequently mislabeled "free trade", "international division of labor", "internationalism", etc.²²

Japan added in conclusion that this economic policy of Anglo-America is sustained by force, and that it was for this reason that agricultural countries were naturally compelled to be either British or American colonies.

While exposing American motives, the Japanese unwittingly exposed their own colonial ambition in Asia. Her reputation as a colonial empire which dated from 1894 or 1895²³ with the acquisition of Taiwan, and then the Sakhalin Islands, and later Korea and Manchu-

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²² Isao Kume, "Rewriting The History of East Asia," *Pillars*, I (December, 1943), p. 7.

²³ Matsuoka, "Japanese Colonial Administration," p. 7.

ria, is common knowledge for the Filipinos to alter their impression of Japan's ambitions for colonial expansion. To free herself from embarrassment, Japan admitted having become a colonial empire,²⁴ but tried to impress the Filipinos with the supposed "nobility of her purpose" by claiming her participation in the war as part of Asia's history of political struggle.²⁵ The Japanese claimed that their country was motivated by the "noble cause of destroying the old order established by Anglo-American imperialism."²⁶ She also imposed upon herself a moral obligation to redeem Asia from "Western clutches" and to establish a New World Order in Asia wherein each country shall be given the privileged position of an independent nation in the concert of free nations."²⁷

While the United States pointed out the sufferings of Korea, Manchuria, North China and Indochina to prove the hallowness of Japan's proposal for independence,²⁸ Japan gave herself the credit for the supposed economic progress of those countries. She presented herself to the Philippines as a "peaceful loving nation", driven into war in order to avenge herself for the "aggravating injuries and insults from the United States and Great Britain." She justified her acquisition of Taiwan "by virtue of the right of conquest," and blamed the Sino-Japanese War on China for the latter's refusal to recognize the independence of Korea. She called the Russo-Japanese war an act of "self defense against Russia's design over Manchuria and Korea."

The Japanese did not devote their criticisms alone to the subject of American imperialism. Other aspects of Philippine culture and society were also evaluated. They looked into the Philippine educational system and discovered its close relationship with American schools — promoting American ideals, language, history, government and even American outlook.²⁹ They found that the country was turning into a cheap imitation of America, and to prevent its shameful and total transformation, the school curricula were drastically revamped. Books and courses on Western culture and values were abolished, and emphasis was placed on vocational education and food production.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Kume, "Rewriting The History of East Asia," p. 8.

²⁸ Friend, *op. cit.*, pp. 221-222.

²⁹ T. F. Ito, "American Altruism In The Philippines," *Philippine Review*, II (March, 1944), 41.

Language as a tool

Tagalog was proclaimed the country's national language and Nippongo the official language in Asia.³⁰ It was the Japanese contention that the introduction of Tagalog in the schools would give people confidence in developing their own culture, and that Nippongo, on the other hand, would direct the populace to Oriental culture and values. In short the introduction of these two Oriental languages would hasten the people's cultural emancipation from the United States.³¹

By the end of 1942, city ordinances were already being printed in Tagalog.³² One thousand basic Tagalog words were prepared by the *Kalibapi* (Kapisanan sa Paglilingkod sa Bagong Pilipino), and titles and offices in the government were Filipinized.³³ Tagalog literature began to flourish through the encouragement of the Japanese Military Administration. Contests on creative writing in Tagalog were periodically announced by the Manila Sinbun-Sya and the Manila City Hall authorities. With this new and favorable treatment of the Tagalog language, a number of our Filipino writers in English were soon trying their hands in Tagalog. A few continued to write in this medium even after the war. The literary activities including frequently conducted contests which marked this period were really focused on one specific theme: "to reflect the spirit and outlook of the New Philippines."

Attempts to 'Nipponize'

Nippongo was also treated with the same enthusiasm as the Tagalog language. Pamphlets on basic lessons in Nippongo were distributed free immediately after the occupation of the Islands. When the press was given permission to function under the supervision of the Japanese Military Administration, all magazines, both in English and in Tagalog, contained sections of basic lessons in Nippongo. These supplemented *The Nippongo Weekly*, a grammar pamphlet which was sold at three centavos a copy.³⁴

³⁰ Military Ordinance No. 13, Concerning Official Language for Public Use, July 24, 1942.

³¹ Takao Yamada, "Reform of the Japanese Language," *Philippine Review*, I (September, 1943), pp. 23-25.

³² Gregorio F. Zaide, *Chronicle of Japanese Occupation, 1941-1943*. (Unpublished manuscripts, no pages.)

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *The Nippongo Weekly* came off the press on February 15, 1943, and issued by the Manila Sinbun-Sya. It is one-half of the regular tabloid newspaper and contained eight pages. From Gregorio F. Zaide, *Chronicle of Japanese Occupation: 1941-1943*. (Unpublished manuscripts.)

Nippongo was made a basic course in the elementary and secondary curricula when the public schools were re-opened under the new regime. Contests on the language were conducted regularly over the radio. In less than two years, a few gifted Filipino youths had learned to speak Nippongo like native speakers of the language.

Columns of the more widely circulated magazines and journals were placed under the supervision of Japanese writers from the Military Information Office. These writers became regular contributors of articles which never deviated from the systematic program of replacing the Spanish-American-oriented culture. They tried to establish a cultural bond between the Philippines and Japan by tracing the past and exaggerating similarities which would link the two nations: from ethnology and history to sociology, art and language.

The persistence to "nipponize" the Philippines was to become absurd when Filipino scholars, compelled to write propaganda articles for the lucrative sums offered by the Japanese controlled press, went looking into the past to search for similarities between the two countries. Wild claims were made in many supposedly scholarly studies, and minute findings were blown into exaggerated proportions. For instance, a Filipino linguist who was directed to find similarities between Tagalog and the Japanese language, came out with an article to suit the demand — a list of Japanese words which he claimed, would be assimilated by the Tagalog language in the near future.³⁵ Later, after the war, said linguist preferred to exclude this particular article from his list of published works.

Historical distortion

Undocumented historical declarations were also made in Philippine history. It was claimed, for example, that Japanese *Samurais* had offered to join the ranks of the Filipinos during the 16th century to smash the Spanish yoke; and that during the Philippine revolution, a number of Japanese had "volunteered to fight and die side by side with their Filipino comrades-in-arms."³⁶

Without evidences to support his contention, a Filipino historian published an article on the supposed intercourse between Japan and

³⁵ Cecilio Lopez, "Foreign Influences in Tagalog," *Philippine Review*, II (July, 1944), 54-57.

³⁶ Mentioned in the Manifesto issued by the Philippine Council of State on Feb. 13, 1943. *Historical Bulletin*, IX (March & June, 1965), 64-65.

the Philippines in the past, and which he elaborately imagined in lieu of real facts and data. Even Rizal's 28 days stay in Japan became an important phase in the life of the hero. Not only did Rizal acquire an Oriental flavor, but even his political ideals were made to originate from Japan.³⁷

Music and the arts also underwent the same systematic pattern of change. American national and patriotic songs, together with books on American values and life, were either burned or banned. Song contests in Tagalog compositions emphasizing Filipino traditions and customs were periodically announced by the Manila *Sinbun-Sya*.³⁸ New Philippine national songs were introduced.³² Japanese songs were taught in schools, public gatherings and entertainment places.⁴⁰

The entire population, young and old, received propaganda education through the schools, through district organizations in towns and villages, and also through their membership in the *Kalibapi* which the Japanese introduced to work for the Filipinization program of the country. Through the *Ka'ibapi*, the Japanese hoped to elicit from the people the essential Oriental outlook and social consciousness they can display by actual participation in social community programs such as food production, neighborhood associations, and community development projects.

Days of significance in Japan were declared special holidays. Parades and mass rallies were held to celebrate historical events which were often highlighted by propaganda speeches of Japanese and Filipino leaders. One huge demonstration which was long to be remembered was the *Ka'ibapi's* mammoth parade of 300,000 flag-waving Filipinos at the Luneta, to celebrate Premier Tojo's early announcement of Philippine Independence.⁴¹

On February 4, 1943, the Manila *Sinbun-Sya* sponsored a movement to change the name of the Philippines to another with a more Oriental

³⁷ Read articles written on Rizal from *The Philippine Review*, 1943-44

³⁸ On February 1, 1943, the Manila *Sinbun-Sya* announced a song contest for the "New Philippine March." C/f Zaide's *Chronicle of Japanese Occupation*. Unpublished papers.

³⁹ On February 7, 1943, the First *Kalibapi* Concert-Meeting was held at the Metropolitan Theatre at 9:30 A.M. The official march of *Kalibapi*, composed by Felipe de Leon, was introduced for the first time to the public. It was sung by a chorus of stage actors and actresses.

⁴⁰ On February 14, 1943, the first presentation of Oriental music in the Philippines was held in the morning by the St. Theresa's College at its Conservatory Hall.

⁴¹ This historic event is recorded in Gregorio F. Zaide's "Epic of Philippine Independence," *Philippine Review*, I (November, 1943), 15.

flavor. To occupy their leisure, local writers, intellectuals and the cultured lower middleclass in the city readily caught up with this particular tempo for Filipinization. The war had temporarily dislocated many of the city dwellers who now spent much of their time idling and intellectualizing in coffee shops where some buy-and-sell business transactions were being made. The Japanese and some Filipino nationalists felt that the move would foster Philippine aspirations and traditions as an Oriental nation. Some of the more outspoken argued that "it is unreasonable for our people to continue honoring the memory of Philip II, a monarch of an Occidental kingdom, and the first to deprive us of our independence . . ." ⁴² The movement was advocated by E. Masao in his daily column in *The Tribune*. The subject became the talk of among others city intellectuals and writers, who were soon divided into two camps: the "fence-sitters" who opposed the change and the "collaborationists" who favored the change. But since the "collaborationists" were each advocating a different name, the debate continued until the list of suggested names included such words as *Silangan*, *Mai*, *Rizal*, *Mailog* (Many Rivers), *Kayumanggi*, *Mutya ng Silangan*, and *Tagala*. A certain D. C. Ticola, even suggested that the country be called "Lapu-Lapu Islands" in honor of King Lapu-Lapu of Mactan. ⁴⁴ The debate went on until a cool-headed Armando Ligaya wrote to castigate:

It is high time that we stop this fancy of changing names. If we indulge in a frenzy of name changing, we shall have a Herculean task before us, because the great bulk of the names of towns and provinces are of Occidental origin. . . . What is wrong with the name Philippines? Why change it to Rizal? Rizal was born under the Philippine sun. Is the name of Jose Rizal y Mercado of Oriental origin? Why don't we change his name too? ⁴⁵

Nonetheless, the Filipinization movement raged for sometime. Manila was divided into twelve administrative districts patterned after the city plan of Greater Tokyo in a colorful festivity on October 31, 1942. ⁴⁶ The event was highlighted by the christening of Jones Bridge into "Banzai Bridge" by Chairman Jorge Vargas in the presence of Japanese and Filipino officials. The new name of the bridge was

⁴² A letter sent by Gregorio Perfecto on February 8, 1943 to the "Public Pulse," *Tribune*.

⁴³ See "our Tomorrow," *Tribune*, February 7, 1943.

⁴⁴ A letter sent to the "Public Pulse," *Tribune*, Feb. 13, 1943, signed D. C. Ticola.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Zaide, *Chronicle of Japanese Occupation*, Unpublished, (no pages).

inscribed in Japanese characters by Lt. Gen. Homma. The twelve districts were given the following Filipino names: (1) *Bagumbayan*: Port Area, Intramuros, Ermita and Malate; (2) *Bagundiwa*: Paco, Pandacan, and Sta. Ana; (3) *Bagumpanahon*: Sampaloc, Sta. Cruz, Quiapo, and San Miguel; (4) *Bagumbuhay*: Tondo, Binondo, and San Nicolas; (5) *Balintawak*: San Francisco del Monte, Galas and La Loma; (6) *Diliman*: Diliman proper, Cubao and University Districts; (7) *San Juan*: San Juan del Monte; (8) *Caloocan*; (9) *Mandaluyong*; (10) *Makati*; (11) *Pasay*; (12) *Parañaque*.

The proponents of the Filipinization movement also made the cinema a vehicle for propaganda. They, however, found Filipino movie productions qualitatively inadequate to meet the demands of realism, much less become a source for inspiration and guidance.⁴⁷ They called Philippine movies "a shame to the nation," its themes "flippant and shallow."⁴⁸ Nevertheless, local motion pictures were produced under the direction and guidance of Japanese movie experts, and Japanese films were shown in local theatres through the Eiga Haikyu-Sha, the Japanese film distributor in Manila.⁴⁹

Fascinated with the life and courage of Dr. Jose Rizal, they laid claim to his thoughts as that of a Japanese, and began to emulate his person and to promote his qualities as examples of "the New Filipino."⁵⁰ Thus Rizal became the first hero to be institutionalized during the Occupation Period and his life became the subject of many literary contests where both Filipino and Japanese writers competed with each other to give the hero an Oriental flavor.⁵¹

The same correctional pattern was made in almost all social and cultural avenues except religion which the Japanese allowed to function without interference. They found the Church useful in controlling society, and its tenets were not exactly opposed to their cultural and political program. However, they were to confess later that they did not meddle with the natives' religious beliefs because they felt that such moves might affect Japan's relation with the Vatican whom they expected to play an important role at the termination of the war.⁵²

⁴⁷ Tsutanu Sawamura, "For The Glory of Philippine Movies," *Philippine Review*, I (February, 1944), p. 30.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Daigaro Takeuti, "Contemporary Japanese Motion Picture," *Philippine Review*, I (June, 1943), p. 43.

⁵⁰ Jun-iti Otani, "Last Moments of Rizal," *Philippine Review*, II (June, 1944), 23-27.

⁵¹ Iwao Kume, "Some Reflections," *Pillars*, I (December, 1944), 6-12.

⁵² Takeuchi Tatsuji, *Manila Diary: Dec. 1942-Oct. 1943*, Appendix A, *The Philippine Polity*, (Yale, 1967), p. 218.

Japan's failure

Analyzing the content of Japanese cultural propaganda in the Philippines, it can be said that Japan had made a fairly accurate if cutting diagnosis of the subservient condition of our culture and economy. But one quality which the Japanese lacked is the patience to direct the people, and also the means by which the country shall be raised to its own feet.

While the Japanese propaganda seemed to have given the Philippines a political and cultural direction, no more had been made to rehabilitate the country's economy. The abrupt halt of material goods from the "free trade" relations with the United States and the failure to substantiate this depletion of supply severely affected the continuance of the normal social lives of the people. Added to this burden was the objective of the Japanese Military Administration "to extract war resources",⁵³ so much so that a few Japanese military officials had confessed to "having taken away ore, copper, and other resources of the Archipelago, instead of bringing in goods in the Philippines."⁵⁴ As a result, the Filipino living standard had continually become depressed since the Japanese arrived.

Some Japanese officials confessed to the lack of Japan's concrete program for post-war policy.⁵⁵ Neither did they have an organized political structure that would bring her policy into execution after the war.⁵⁶ Even the Japanese who composed the cultural propaganda group confessed among themselves that their actions under the Military Administration were confined to those needed for the prosecution of the war.⁵⁷

The supposed economic self-sufficiency program, except for the lip-service given to it, never had a headstart. Filipinos were left to improvise and fend for themselves, and the Japanese procured by force whatever they desired on all matters. Without the benefit of industry and science, the standard of living began to decline, accompanied by a hatred for the Japanese whom the people blamed for their misery.

While the miserable condition of life during the occupation was welcomed by Japan as a great leap towards the country's emancipation from American dependency, the population in general saw it as a

⁵³ Royama Masamichi & Takeuchi Tatsuji. *The Philippine Polity*, p. 226.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 215..

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

degradation, a backward step from the path of progress. When the Japanese forcibly enforced self-sufficiency by creating zone groups into work programs, the educated and the lower middle class deduced the action as an effort to humiliate their persons. When Japan ventured into censoring school textbooks to discourage the corrupting influences of American materialism, the people saw it as a violation of the basic tenets of democratic freedom. Indeed, the cultural and political re-orientation program of Japan was destined to fail, "even from the very start".⁵⁸

The Japanese concept of brotherhood sounded hypocritical to the Filipinos. We were repelled by the Japanese's "glorification of Spartan virtues," and their devotion to duty seemed fanatical and irrational. They were intellectually unconvincing as well as physically repulsive.

On the other hand, the Japanese found the Filipinos "uncooperative," and the "laziest" of all the peoples with whom they had had army experience.⁵⁹ A Japanese writer acquiescingly observed: "It would be a hopeless thing to expect any future for a people devoid of the sense of appreciation for native genius and things native . . . who humble themselves before anything foreign and alien."⁶⁰

Theodore Friend surmised that "by 1941, the Filipinos were already too well developed under American rule or too spoiled as the Japanese saw it, for the invaders to accomplish much . . ."⁶¹

The 'triumph' of Westernization

One has also to consider the circumstances surrounding the development of the Philippines as a nation to understand its people's negative reaction to Japanese intellect and judgment. This country has undertaken a long process of Westernization — a little more than 300 years under Spain, and 41 years under American rule spent by the colonial powers in obliterating our Oriental heritage, and asserting the superiority of Occidental culture. This was began by Spain in a somewhat visible effort when Christianity was forcibly introduced in the Islands and resumed by the Americans on a more extensive scale — through education — during the first half of the 20th century. The adverse effects of this de-Orientalization had been the lamblike willingness of the Filipinos to adopt Western language, culture and even prejudices; the

⁵⁸ Agoncillo, *Fateful Years*, p. 338.

⁵⁹ Friend, *Between Two Empires*. p. 232.

⁶⁰ S. Matukawa, "A Hospital Visit," *Philippine Review* II (May, 1944), 23.

⁶¹ Friend, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

hastening of the Filipinos' desire to turn away from their own past and identity; and their erroneous belief that through the imitation of Western ways and the importation of Western technology can their journey towards progress be ensured.

Because of the extensive process of de-Orientalization, the Filipinos took the entire episode of Japanese invasion as a temporary interlude, a momentary inconvenience brought by world affairs, and our undying faith in America's ability to extricate us from the encumbrances created by the Japanese occupation of the Islands. Indeed, one cannot unlearn in three years a mental attitude which took almost four hundred years.

In addition to this factor, the Filipinos had already been warned of Japan's growing territorial ambitions in Asia, even as early as the 1930's. The Manchurian incident of 1931, the invasion of China in 1937, and the atrocities committed against the people of Nanking which shocked the rest of the world⁶² were warnings against a type of people we were to confront in the future. The atrocities and massacres in Bataan and Corregidor, and the brutalities committed by the Japanese in our country, had confirmed the so-called "perils of the yellow race." It was natural for a people who had been violated to remain deaf to the voices of her enemies, much less to forget, through her propaganda, the memory of a painful experience.

The Great Co-Prosperity Sphere Program

On the other hand, Japan's Co-Prosperity Sphere Program can not be considered a total failure. America's initial defeat in the Pacific may have given Asians the idea of their capacity to free themselves from Western domination. The victory may have given all Orientals a sense of pride, even if the feeling had not been shared by a great section of Philippine society who took the fall of Bataan as their own personal defeat. Nonetheless, the sight of Americans retreating on all fronts in 1941 and 1942 must have given dramatic proofs that the white man was not invincible.⁶³

When the Japanese asked the Philippines to join them in a program of Asia united "in the spirit of universal brotherhood" under the leadership of Japan with each nation allotted its proper place "leading to peace and prosperity," the idea was not exactly unconvincing to some Filipinos. Like many Asian idealists, Filipino nationalists must have seen

⁶² William Craig, *The Fall of Japan*, (London, 1967), p. XIII.

⁶³ John Toland, *The Rising Sun*, p. 507.

in the program a chance to free the Philippines from exploitation by the white man.

Of course it is true that the Co-Prosperity Sphere program had been corrupted by Japanese militarists who looked upon Southeast Asia with its rich natural resources as a solution to their economic ills,⁶⁴ but the program's call for Pan Asianism had its appeal to the masses. The mammoth demonstration of more than 300,000 Filipinos at Luneta to commemorate the Kalibapi's Filipino movement,⁶⁵ the Makapili and Sakdalistas' commitment to the "Asia for the Asians" policy, and the growth of the national language during the occupation, can be viewed as signs of the people's growing consciousness of Asian nationalism and the de-Westernization of the Philippines.

When Japan gave a token gesture to realize the Co-Prosperity program by giving Burma her independence on August 1, 1943, followed by the Philippines on October 14, and the establishment of the Provincial Government of Free India a week later, the Asians considered the events very significant. It is true that the new governments were puppets of Japan, but for millions of Asians, it was their first glimpse of freedom from the white man.

A Japanese writer described the enthusiasm of millions of Asians reaching the culmination of success when China, Manchukuo, the Philippines and Burma sent representatives to Tokyo for the Greater East Asia Conference early in November.⁶⁶ "We were getting together," Ba Maw of Burma wrote, "not so much as separate peoples but as members of a single historical family containing all these peoples." Even Jose P. Laurel, President of the Philippines, found Pan Asianism irresistible: "One billion Orientals, one billion people of Greater East Asia," he proclaimed at the formal reception on the eve of the initial meeting, "how could they have been dominated, a great portion of them particularly by England and America?"⁶⁷

Thirty years have passed and Japan has recovered from the holocaust of war to resume a respected place among the nations of the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

⁶⁵ Gregorio F. Zaide, "Epic of Philippine Independence," *Philippine Review* I (November, 1943), 15.

⁶⁶ Iwao Kume, "A Comparison of Two Charters," *Pillars*, I (March, 1944), 27-28.

⁶⁷ Jose P. Laurel, Speech in Tokyo, November (?), 1943, as quoted in Iwao Kume, "Comparison of Two Charters," *Pillars*, (March, 1944), pp. 27-28.

world. The Yamato is said to be an exceptional race and is prophesied to turn defeat into victory. The economic and industrial privileges extended by America to Japan after the war have enabled these two nations to control Southeast Asia's economy, both sharing and controlling once again the region's wealth of raw materials, and dictating the economic and commercial policies each government in Southeast Asia is to adopt.

Meanwhile, the Philippines has remained among the nations of the Third World, has twice increased in number, and punctually celebrates a day of each year to commemorate her dramatic defense of Bataan, true to the comic rôle she plays in the theatre of war drama. Often puzzled by the turn of events, the Filipino simple mind could not comprehend beyond the shallow literacy and stereotyped learning with which America had fed her mind before the war, at times wondering, in lucid moments, if Japan, after all, had really won the war of 1941.

The Filipinos today are still well known for their kindness and hospitality. But they are now slowly waking up from the over-extended reigns of mental lethargy and complacency. Their unbounded faith in America and her actions in the Philippines are no longer the prevailing mood among the youth, although it has not been entirely shaken off. There are still Filipino elements who remain subservient to America and to whatever cause she upholds to suit her purpose. The loyalty of these elements are not unshackled by the gravity of historical truth, and they find meaningful solace in the narrow context of their dramatic heroism in Bataan and Corregidor. But today, even that glory is obliterated by the blazing light of political reality, for it holds no relevance to the people's struggle for true democracy and freedom.

This truth is dramatically symbolized in a recent incident⁶⁸ when a veteran of the World War II cried out in protest against a farmer's desecration of the hallowed war-monument in Capas for turning the sacred ground into a pigsty. The action is indeed outrageous, one may say. Yet, on second thought, we may perhaps ask if the action is any different from that of our government when it extended to Japanese investors special economic and industrial privileges to exploit our country and our people.

⁶⁸ See headline, *Bulletin Today* XXIX (April 7, 1975), I.