

# **Remembering World War II in the Philippines: Memorials, Commemorations and Movies**

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The end of World War II in the Philippines in September 1945 (the official surrender document was signed on September 3) brought an end to three years of trauma in the country. The shock of the outbreak of war; air raids on cities and the resultant deaths of civilians; mass exoduses; the Japanese occupation of Manila and key cities and towns; the fall of Bataan and Corregidor in 1942—and the end of all organized resistance afterwards comprised the first part of World War II in the Philippines. The second part was the Japanese occupation proper—the Japanese Military Administration and the Philippine Executive Commission under it; the Japanese-sponsored Philippine republic of 1943; the *Kempeitai*, rationing, controls and censorship. Opposing Japanese rule was a thriving resistance movement loyal to Philippine Commonwealth and the United States. The third part of the war in the Philippines was the liberation: campaigns to end the Japanese occupation—campaigns which ended in much death and destruction. Major battles of the Pacific war took place in the Philippines: the Battle of Leyte Gulf, the appearance of the Kamikaze as an organized unit; the Battle of Manila and others. The total loss in Filipino life was estimated by the government was 1.1 million for the duration of the war. But with the end of the war came euphoria at liberation, even with the losses. The euphoria turned to be short-lived as an avalanche of problems beset the country: collaboration with the Japanese; recognition of veterans and payment of back pay; and rehabilitation of the country.

The war was seen by many as something worthy of remembering, commemorating and being proud of. There were key dates which were memorable: the day of the start of the war, the day the Japanese took Manila (January 2), the fall of Bataan (April 9) and the fall of Corregidor (May 6). Individual towns and cities had their respective days of occupation. There were organization days for the various guerrilla resistance groups; the days of the first U.S. air raids on the Philippines, and then the days of liberation for the different towns and cities. Some of these days would become days of commemoration—officially or unofficially—and would be occasions to remember the war. To help perpetuate the memory of certain incidents, individuals or units, memorials and historical markers were put up, either by the government or by private groups. Some places had become well known during the war: Bataan, Corregidor, Leyte, Lingayen, as well as several battle sites throughout the country. Reflecting concerns of the day and changing views of the war were movies. This paper is a preliminary look at these through time, an examination of official and unofficial memories of the war in the Philippines.

### The early years after the war: 1945–1950

The first official commemorations and memorials in the Philippines were those of U.S. Army units shortly after the battle. Some of these were the commemorative markers for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Division, which helped liberate the North Luzon city of Baguio; for Balete Pass (renamed Dalton Pass after Brig. Gen. James L. Dalton II, killed in the fighting) by the twenty-fifth Infantry Division and others. Some of these still exist, but the commemorations and memorials were held basically for the unit concerned.

The Philippines became independent on July 4, 1946, and the government faced immense challenges to rebuild after the war. But the national government realized the need to pay tribute to the war dead and to the veterans who had fought for freedom. There were several war cemeteries around the country, but the most important of them—in the sense that it had the largest number of dead—was the cemetery of the former prisoner of war camp at Camp O'Donnell, in Capas, Tarlac. Official memorial ceremonies marked by speeches by the president and vice president of the Philippines here on November 30 in 1946 and 1947 were apparently the first formal state memorial ceremonies. The date had no connection with World War II specifically, but was National Heroes Day, a national holiday commemorated before the war honoring Filipino heroes from all periods of Philippine history. The choice of the site was significant, and so were the speeches. There was a concrete memorial which had been allowed by the Japanese in 1942, which provided a focal point for the ceremonies.

In the 1946 ceremony, President Manuel A. Roxas profusely gave thanks to the dead soldiers: “We are what we are—free and marching forward—in large measure because of what they did.”<sup>1</sup> The next year, Vice President Elpidio Quirino honored the war dead: “The subtleness or sincerity of praise cannot add new glories to their names. What they accomplished now belongs to eternity. Only the eloquence of action and the imperishable work of nation-building will satisfy their victimized souls. For that we must give concrete form to the ideals and principles for which they gave their all. Let every anniversary of their holocaust, therefore, be an occasion for the periodic revision in retrospect of our accomplishments in the furtherance of liberty and freedom and of the fame they won for us as a people in the ravines and trenches of Bataan and Corregidor.” He emphasized remembering their deeds, but stressed that the people had to face the problems which confronted the country with unity. Peace and freedom were worth everything.<sup>2</sup>

There were other cemeteries for the World War II dead, most being makeshift, in Manila, in Bataan, in Fort Santiago which had been the Kempeitai headquarters and site of massacres at the end of the war; and in Manila's North Cemetery, where the Kempeitai had executed many victims.

Many battle sites were still dangerous right after the war, or were difficult to get to because of the nature of the roads and transportation. The island fortress of Corregidor

1 President Manuel Roxas' 1946 speech is printed in Manuel Roxas, *Speeches, Addresses and Messages of President Roxas* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1954), Vol. 1, p. 274.

2 Elpidio Quirino, *The Quirino Way* (Manila: privately printed, 1955), pp. 70, 72–74.

was of such symbolism that it would remain in U.S. hands until October 12, 1947, when the “Rock” was formally turned over to Philippine government. Both Roxas and Quirino spoke at the turnover ceremony, emphasizing the importance of working for peace for all, and highlighting the U.S.-Philippine partnership. The island would henceforth be a pilgrimage site of Filipinos and Americans.<sup>3</sup> These would be themes which would be repeated in many of the speeches of this period onto the 1950s: the importance of working for peace, remembering the valiant deeds of the Filipino and American comrades in arms, and maintaining a vibrant U.S.-Philippine relationship.

The themes in the speeches were echoed in the early historical markers put up by the then Philippine Historical Committee. In Bataan, for example, an early marker read: “The little mountainous peninsula of Bataan saved democracy and the whole world from the evil hands of the devil.” Bataan and Corregidor, which fought beyond human endurance, and whose defenders gave up so much, became the main symbols of the war in the Philippines. Anger seethed against Japan and would not abate until more than ten years later.

The Philippine Historical Committee—then the government agency which put up official historical markers, also quickly put up markers in Leyte, where Gen. MacArthur and the then president of the Philippine Commonwealth landed in October 1944. Next to Bataan and Corregidor, Leyte—particularly the towns of Palo, Tacloban and Dulag—would be the next most important place in the Philippine World War II commemorations. Other significant sites where official markers were installed were Lingayen, where the U.S. forces landed in 1945 to commence to liberation of Luzon from the Japanese; and the U.S. High Commissioner’s residence in Baguio, where Gen. Yamashita signed the surrender documents on September 3, 1945.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to the Philippine Historical Committee, local governments and private groups—particularly veterans groups—put up their own memorials and markers to commemorate their own battles, martyrs, or, in some instances, tragedies. Various towns and cities celebrated their own days of liberation and continue to do so today.

Still another regular means of commemorating and remembering the war (as well as other historical events, personalities and institutions), was the issuance of special stamps and cancel marks. Early instances of these were VJ Day in the Philippines; the first anniversary of the Leyte landing; first anniversary of VJ Day and so on.

Organized partially to perpetuate the memories of the war were various veterans groups. Most guerrilla organizations had their own association. As there were so many, it became necessary to organize a federation—as early as 1946 there existed a Confederation of Legions of Philippine Veterans, which held national conventions in which the president spoke. These associations participated in early commemorations of liberation and independence days, but a major reason for their creation was for to fight for veterans’ rights and benefits. Many of them extolled relations with the U.S. (in fact, there are a number of U.S. veterans organizations—such as the American Legion and the Veterans

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3 1947 speech of President Quirino in *The Quirino Way*, pp. 67–69; Roxas’ speech in *Speeches, Addresses and Messages of President Roxas*, Vol. 2 (1947), p. 532.

4 National Historical Institute, *Historical Markers: Regions I–IV and CAR* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1993), p. 336. The marker still stands, in an enclosed area in the town of Hermosa.

of Foreign Wars) still in the Philippines. Ties with the U.S. at this time were particularly strong, particularly with the start of the Cold War. In the late 1940s these men were young, and many were starting careers in politics and business.<sup>5</sup>

Hardly had the war ended when war movies became one major genre of recalling or viewing the war. Hollywood war movies of course came in first, but as the Filipino movie studios got back on their feet, they began making war movies. The first postwar Filipino movie—*Orasang Ginto* (Golden Clock)—extolled the heroism of the Filipino soldier. Twenty of the thirty-four films made in next year were on same theme, together with the relief and euphoria brought by the liberation. Some of these were *The Voice of Freedom*, about the patriotic radio announcers on Corregidor before it fell; *Tagumpay* (Victory); *Fort Santiago* (Filipino heroism in the face of the tortures of the Kempeitai); *Intramuros*; *The End of the Road* (on the wartime exploits of Manuel Colayco, killed while leading American troops in Manila); and *Death March*. These movies show Japanese violence and brutality, and Filipino heroism, with the Americans coming to aid the Filipinos. Critics warned that the violence in the movies might spark more violence, but these movies also provided a catharsis for Filipinos who remembered the war too well—and also countered Hollywood movies featuring the Americans as the victors the Philippines.<sup>6</sup>

Movies were not bound by political correctness or other restrictions, and thus reflected public sentiments or other views not brought out by the official commemorations and markers. Some movies explored other themes—collaborators with the Japanese actually helping the guerrillas (Hantik); the tragedy of war, difficulty of making choices; and so on. Heroism still showed, and the Japanese were one dimensional—always inhuman and brutal. The Filipinos, when appropriately armed and motivated, massacred the Japanese by the hundreds, cradling machine guns on bare arms. The role of women and spies, among others, were also brought out.

Later movies depicted more sober reality—the plight of veterans, widows and war orphans; guerrillas unable to adjust to civilian life and facing poverty (*Anak Dalita*; *Lupang Pangako*; *Palaboy ng Tadhana*). Others showed the other side of American soldiers—who rivaled Filipinos for the affections of women, and then left them behind. (*Hanggang Pier*; *Victory Joe*). Still others revealed the moral degradation after the war, corruption and the peasants' reaction by rebelling and joining the outlawed Huk movement. Desertion and collaboration was also shown—even in Bataan, because of differences with American superiors (*Apoy sa Langit*). None of these issues came out in the memorials or commemorations.

### **The 1950s: ten years after the start of the war**

By 1951, some time had passed since the war, but war memories were still very vivid and events were common knowledge. However, the Cold War had grown more

5 The groups put out souvenir programs and other publications reporting their activities and occasionally, historical accounts of the war.

6 Agustin L. Sotto, "War and the Aftermath in Philippine Cinema" in Gina Barte (ed.) *Panahon ng Hapon: Sining sa Digmaan, Digmaan sa Sining* [The Japanese Time: The Arts in War, War in the Arts] (Manila: Sentrong Pangkultura ng Pilipinas, 1992), pp. 175–179.



tense with the advent of a nuclear showdown. The Communist threat to the government was very real and veterans and participants were actively involved in government, business and diplomacy.

Commemorations of war-related events became more institutionalized, with the fall of Bataan becoming a national holiday per presidential proclamation. The president himself—Magsaysay and Garcia—attended official programs close to or in places where battles had taken place. Magsaysay, for example, attended the first Bataan Day held in Bataan itself, with many veterans present. Bataan Day became a symbol for the war, and speeches extolled the heroism of both Filipinos and Americans, at a time when the Fil-American relationship was considered a “special relationship.” President Garcia in turn sent official representatives to other commemorations when he could not be present.

Apart from Bataan, historic spots were recognized by historical markers, particularly in Northern Luzon, where the guerrilla resistance movement was especially strong and organized. A guerrilla victory against the Japanese in Bessang Pass in 1945 was seen as another event to be proud of and to commemorate, and appropriate markers and commemorations were held in Northern Luzon with official government sanction.

One reason for the institutionalization of war-related days sites was because specific veterans groups were organized no longer simply to fight for veterans benefits, but also make themselves useful citizens of the country and to keep the memory alive. The Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor was formally organized on April 9, 1952, with noble and far reaching goals: “to uphold and defend the Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines; to rededicate our lives to the service of God, our country and our fellowmen; to live up to, foster and perpetuate the noble traditions and ideals of our people; to maintain law and order; to promote peace and good will on earth; to strengthen our bonds of comradeship and keep alive the memories of our military service together; to help one another and those whom our deceased brothers-in-arms left behind; and to safeguard and transmit to posterity the principles of justice, freedom and democracy.” Among its members were prominent business, military and social men, lending distinction to the organization. The DBC would hold national conventions regularly to remind the veterans of their duties, as well as for camaraderie, and to fight for recognition of Bataan Day and battle sites. They succeeded and today Bataan Day is a national holiday. Bataan Day remembered Fil-American heroism, sacrifice and suffering for democracy and freedom. The role of Bataan in safeguarding liberty, freedom and democracy, safeguarding Australia from invasion and the readiness of Filipinos to answer the Philippines’ call are themes which were repeated in the various commemorations.<sup>7</sup>

Friendship with the U.S. was also another recurring theme in the 1950s and onwards. In a symbolic ceremony in 1955, DBC members gathered samples of soil from all fifty-one Philippine provinces and forty-eight U.S. states, and mixed them together to symbolize the common ideals for which the American and Filipino heroes fought and died for in Bataan and Corregidor.<sup>8</sup>

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7 Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor commemorative booklet (1956), pp. 13–16.

8 Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor [DBC], *DBC Golden Anniversary Souvenir Publication* (Quezon City: Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor, 1992), pp. 64–65.

Another veterans group which moved to install markers in its area of operations was the U.S. Armed Forces in the Philippines-North Luzon (USAFIP NL), Inc. This group, which had many prominent young politicians (future president Ferdinand Marcos was a member) in it, was able to get several markers built and also got a presidential proclamation recognizing Bessang Pass day.<sup>9</sup>

Since the 1950s saw the deepening of the Cold War, the U.S.-Philippine alliance in World War II had great significance in the commemorations of the decade. Since many veterans were in their prime, they were called upon to contribute to the security of the country.

But the 1950s also saw a rise of nationalism in the Philippines, particularly with dissatisfaction arising from U.S. bases on Philippine soil, the unbalanced trade link between the U.S. and the Philippines, and the veterans recognition issue. Relations between the U.S. and the Philippines would officially become more cold, as interests clashed, but the people were still overwhelmingly pro-American.

The Philippines reopened its doors to Japan at this time. After signing the San Francisco Peace Treaty, a prolonged debate on a reparations agreement with Japan ensued, finally being resolved in 1956. Although the public perception of Japan was very negative and angry, the government allowed a Japanese group to come to the Philippines in 1958 to gather the bones of Japanese war dead.<sup>10</sup> The reception they met was still angry, but there were others who were willing to forgive—but not forget. In order not to offend Filipinos, the Japanese stated that in their prayers and rituals they would also recognize the “heroic spirits of Filipino civilians and military with all due respect.” The problem was that since the rituals were conducted in Japanese, there was no way of checking whether this was true. In any case, this group stayed out of the media’s eye.

There were still Japanese stragglers in the 1950s. The surrender of some and reports or others prompted a movie on stragglers—*Patay Kung Patay* (1959)—but it was a comedy and the Japanese stragglers were made bumbling fools on the screen. It was a continuance of the practice of ridiculing the Japanese.

### **The 1960s: twentieth and twenty-fifth anniversaries**

The start of the 1960s saw the Philippine government trying out nationalistic policies as opposed to the strong pro-American stand just after the war. As U.S.-Philippine relations drew apart, the U.S. government, with Philippine acquiescence, sent retired Gen. Douglas MacArthur on a sentimental visit to the Philippines in 1961. Coinciding with Philippine independence day, the trip was a great success, and memories of the war—and gratefulness to MacArthur—surged. MacArthur visited Manila, Corregidor, Lingayen, Leyte and Cebu, where he met former president Osmena and exchanged memories. The trip was euphoric, with crowds filling the streets as had never been seen before; MacArthur again proclaimed “I have returned” to an enthralled population. But it was also tinged

9 U.S. Army Forces in the Philippines—Northern Luzon (USAFIP-NL), Inc., *14<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bessang Pass Day Souvenir Yearbook* (1959).

10 Nakano Satoshi, “The Politics of Mourning” in Ikehata Setsuho and Lydia Yu-Jose, eds., *Philippines-Japan Relations* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003), pp. 343, 347.

in sadness, as MacArthur was older and could no longer promise to return. During his trip he unveiled several historical markers, marking places he had been in during the war. He even left his footsteps in cement in a memorial at Leyte, where he landed in 1944.<sup>11</sup>

Twentieth anniversary ceremonies were held for Bataan, Corregidor, Leyte and a few other locations. Markers were put up by the newly organized Veterans Federation of the Philippines. The sprawling Manila American Cemetery—largest outside the U.S.—was completed and opened to the public.<sup>12</sup> The Philippine government also put up a state cemetery (Libingan ng mga Bayani) near the U.S. cemetery, the bulk of those buried being World War II POW dead.

But the times were changing, and the ship which took MacArthur around was made in Japan, part of Japanese reparations. The Philippines was slowly reopening to Japan, and the year after MacArthur visited, the Japanese crown prince also visited the Philippines, to a warm albeit distanced at first, welcome. People were able to distinguish the newer generation in Japan from the wartime generation, although rancor still remained.

The twenty-fifth anniversary commemorations were major events covered not only locally but also throughout the world. The Philippines' president, Ferdinand Marcos, had been a war veteran, and had fought in Bataan, had been incarcerated in prison camp, and joined the guerrillas. His political campaign capitalized on his heroism during the war, and he was an honored guest at veterans conventions.

To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary, plans were made for a grand series of ceremonies, in Manila, in Bataan and elsewhere. Reunions of veterans were set, with many survivors from the U.S. planning in to attend the special rites. A massive cross on top of a mountain which was fought over to control the peninsula was started—the cornerstone was laid in 1966, the main ceremonies were held at its site in 1967. Due to lack of funds, however, the completion was delayed and it was formally inaugurated in 1970. Special magazine issues were published, commemorative stamps, reprints of wartime newspapers, exhibits of war memorabilia and art contests were held. Individual kilometer posts marking every single kilometer of the Death March were inaugurated. The classic radio message announcing the fall of Bataan was reread by the same announcer. Wreaths were laid at the various war cemeteries and memorials, and new memorials were unveiled. For the first time, the Japanese ambassador was invited, although he was given no speaking part. In all, it was a very moving series of ceremonies.

The speeches and messages harkened back to Fil-American friendship, the need to fight for freedom, as well as the importance of remembering the sacrifices of the Filipinos and Americans. Marcos stated: "Twenty five years ago today, Filipino and American soldiers reached, on this high and hallowed ground, the 'limits of human endurance.' They were soldiers and yet by wagering their lives against the enemy they obeyed no mere command—but the higher voice—their pride and dignity as men who loved and would

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11 "I Shall Return" pamphlet, July 1961. Also see *Sentimental Journey* (Manila: U.S. Information Service, 1961).

12 American Battle Monuments Commission, *Manila American Cemetery and Memorial* (n.p.: Government Printing Office, 1976), pp. 4–7. A total of 17,206 war dead are interred, with the names of an additional 36,282 missing engraved on memorial walls.

die for freedom. We are here not to commensurate the bitter fate of Bataan; we are here to enshrine the triumph of the human spirit. xxx Bataan is the unifying spirit of the Filipinos, particularly our generation who were tested in its crucible. But it is also the eternal forge of two peoples—Filipino and American—with a common commitment to freedom.”<sup>13</sup>

Marcos further stated: “Only free men have histories. Slaves have fates. Only the free have destinies. Bataan has a legacy: we are its inheritors. Bataan teaches the Filipino he must depend upon his own strength before he depends on others.” But Marcos also brought in the present, and the need to continue the fight—against poverty, ignorance and disease. Conspicuously, there was no mention of Japan.

The twenty-fifth Anniversary of the Fall of Corregidor was also marked by a series of events, although less grandiose than those for Bataan. Bataan had, after all, been a largely Filipino fight (majority were Filipinos) while Corregidor was more of an American fight, a postscript. But the American government, for its part, planned to build the Pacific War Memorial, not just to commemorate the war in the Philippines, but other battles in the Pacific.

The Pacific War Memorial consists of a complex fronted by two flagpoles flying the Philippine and U.S. flags. At its center is a circular altar symbolic of a wreath of victory—rotunda with circular altar directly under dome’s open center. (The sun is supposed to shine directly on the altar at noon on May 6—when Corregidor formally surrendered). At one end is a towering steel sculpture, an eternal flame in steel designed by Filipino sculptor Aristides Demetrio. Between the altar and the eternal flame is a series of descending and ascending platforms surrounded with flowing water, symbolizing the descent into defeat and the rise to victory. On both sides are marble panels inscribed with names of Pacific war battles. On one side of the memorial complex is a museum. The U.S. government pointed out that they had chosen Corregidor over other sites; the whole complex was built by the Seabees with American funds. Completed in 1968, it was turned over to the Philippine government which proclaimed it as a shrine. This monument, still well maintained, is a major attraction in Corregidor today.<sup>14</sup>

The major memorial in Bataan, the Dambana ng Kagitingan (Altar of Valor) was completed and inaugurated in 1970. It consists of a memorial cross 92 meters high, 30 meter wide, with an elevator and viewing gallery. Below the cross is a colonnade with an altar, a stained glass mural behind altar, marble reliefs showing different scenes of the Bataan campaign, and insignias and flag poles for all the units which fought in the Philippines’ defense in 1941–1942. The campaign is recounted in engravings on the walls. A museum is located under the altar.<sup>15</sup> Through time, various veterans groups—Filipino and American—have put up their own unit memorials in the area. Various towns in Bataan also put up their own memorials to the battle.

The importance of these commemorations on U.S.-Philippine ties was significant and very timely since the Vietnam War was being fought and the Philippines had sent a

13 Ferdinand E. Marcos, *Defenders of Freedom and Peace* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1967), p. 3.

14 *Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor commemorative booklet*, (1956) pp. 13–16.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 53–54.

civic action team there. The Americans needed allies and the twenty-fifth anniversary was a chance to solidify old ties.

Twenty-fifth anniversaries of the U.S. landing at Leyte in 1944, Bessang Pass, the entry of American troops into Manila, and individual town and city liberation dates were also commemorated. Many cities and towns had put up memorials to remind people of the travails of war or to honor Filipino veterans. Many of these memorials include relics of war: in Zamboanga City, a tourist attraction is the “Gun of Aggression”—two Japanese 120 mm naval guns placed in a rotunda. Smaller towns exhibit Japanese helmets, machine guns of small artillery pieces. (Two guns in front of the General Headquarters building of the Philippine Armed Forces are, interestingly, Japanese 120 mm guns, with no marker.) The Veterans Federation of the Philippines put up several markers in selected sites.

A unique group is the War Heroes Committee of Ateneo de Manila University, which put a memorial in the university to honor its alumni in World War II and other historical events. Installed in December 1969, it is the only one of its type in any school in the Philippines, and has been expanded to contain a small museum. Names continue to be added to those honored.

In other battle sites, veterans organizations, local governments and private groups put up memorials at this time, such as the Battle for Zigzag Pass in Zambales; Tagaytay Ridge, where U.S. paratroopers landed in 1945, and elsewhere. Official ceremonies were held at Leyte, Bessang Pass and elsewhere, but they paled in comparison with the Bataan rites of 1967.

In contrast with the close ties in U.S.-Philippine relations emphasized in the formal ceremonies, dissent and anti-U.S. sentiment was prevalent in universities, labor groups and sectors of media. The anti-U.S. sentiment stemmed from opposition to the Vietnam War, unequal trade relations, problems in veterans recognition and claims of neocolonialism. Some writers claimed that the defenders were American lackeys or mercenaries; others questioned the real significance of Bataan, which was, after all, a defeat. These attacks led to rebuttals from the government and the veterans, but did lead to deep questions.<sup>16</sup>

The landmark Filipino World War II movie of the decade was not on Bataan, however. Instead, it was a large-budget presentation of the 1945 Battle of Manila—the battle which destroyed the bulk of the city and resulted in 100,000 civilian dead. Entitled *Manila Open City* (incorrect because it was never declared an open city), it featured an all star cast including Americans. Made for international release, it was shot on location and followed the style of *The Longest Day*—vignettes and anecdotes on the Battle of Manila. While it brought out the tragedy of the battle, it also showed a critical view of the Americans who destroyed part of the city, and it also—probably for the first time in Philippine movies—brought out a very human Japanese who saved civilians from the carnage.

### **The martial law years**

In 1972, after progressively worsening conditions in the Philippines, Marcos de-

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16 An example of criticism is Quijano de Manila's “What Really Happened in Bataan,” *Philippines Free Press*, 6 April 1963, pp. 36–39, 67, which presented a less glorious version of the campaign. Veterans and the Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor quickly responded in subsequent issues.

clared Martial Law and remained in power until 1986. During these 14 years, war commemorations received much attention and many memorials were built by the government. Marcos' being a veteran—supposedly the most decorated Filipino war hero—gave veterans affairs a prominent place during this period, particularly since many war veterans occupied key positions in government and in the military.

Regular official commemorations were held at Bataan, Corregidor, Leyte and Besang Pass, while towns and cities held their own commemorations. These typically consisted of wreath layings, speeches praising the heroes of the war, announcing new veterans benefits. In the case of Leyte, the ceremonies usually involved a reenactment of the American landing, with the highlight being an actor playing MacArthur wading ashore and proclaiming that he had returned. The commemorations also became venues for the announcement of government policies; as time went on, the speeches focused more on government policies and the historical content diminished.

On Bataan Day 1976, Marcos said: "Every nation needs a Bataan . . . a symbol of national unity. Amid the injuries of war we saw ourselves gather together as one people, one nation. Bound up in all its wounds and assault upon its dignity, the Filipino rose with a proud face to salute the world."<sup>17</sup> This speech showed a shift from the 1950s and the 1960s emphasis on a U.S.-Philippine alliance, moving towards self-reliance.

In 1975, a memorial shrine was put up in Kiangán, the Bantayog sa Kiangán (Kiangán Shrine). Along with other official memorials, it was under the Military Shrines Service of the Department of National Defense. This shrine is unique because it uses native architecture as its motif, memorializing the mountain peoples who fought in the guerrilla resistance. Kiangán was also significant as the place where Gen. Yamashita surrender to the American forces in 1945.

The next year, on the occasion of the thirty-first anniversary of the victory at Besang Pass, Marcos urged the building of war memorials in Philippine cities. He had seen the war memorials in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.<sup>18</sup> While the government historical agency and other groups would put up their own memorials or markers,<sup>19</sup> what would sprout in the 1970s would be Japanese memorials.

Although Marcos kept close ties with the U.S., he opened up to Japan. Marcos has, in the first year of Martial Law, unilaterally ratified the Treaty of Amity, Commerce and Navigation between the Philippines and Japan. Debates on this treaty had dragged on since 1961. With its ratification, the doors to Japanese trade and investment were opened. The war commemorations also opened up to include Japanese.

Since the Americans and Filipinos had their own war cemeteries, Marcos allowed the Japanese to construct a memorial to the Japanese war dead at Caliraya, in Laguna. This was the first large-scale war memorial built by the Japanese government outside Japan; it was formally turned over to the Philippine government in 1976. Caliraya would become a center of Japanese pilgrimages apart from specific battlefields.<sup>20</sup>

17 Excerpt in *Bataan—Corregidor* (Manila: Philippine Tourism Authority, 1980).

18 "Urge Building of city war memorials" *Bulletin Today*, 15 June 1976, p. 1.

19 See National Historical Institute, *Historical Markers*, *passim*.

20 On Japanese bone-gathering trips and others, see Nakano, pp. 337–376. On the Japanese me-



The Japanese began sending organized groups to the Philippines, to visit former battle sites, collect the remains of the war dead, and put up their own memorials. Unit memorials thus mushroomed throughout the Philippines, starting in 1973, from small wooden strips to large towers. Some were only in Japanese; other only Japanese and Tagalog; other in Japanese, English and Tagalog. The Japanese text was almost always the same, for the repose of Japanese souls. Some of the markers included Filipinos and Americans, and almost all were for peace. In some cases the Japanese text did not correspond with the English or Tagalog text; others were repentant for the death and destruction caused. The memorials were put up by veterans groups, local governments, private groups such as the Lions Club and so on. Most of these memorials are in battlefields, but a few are in cemeteries—Muntinglupa Prison, where some Japanese war criminals were executed; and in Los Banos, to commemorate the place of execution of Generals Homma and Yamashita.<sup>21</sup>

Not all Japanese memorials were put up by Japanese. In the 1970s, there existed in Angeles, Pampanga the Kamikaze Memorial Society (Kameso). It was dedicated to the memory of the Kamikaze pilots and by 1975 had put up a marker at the location of the airfield from which the first Kamikaze mission took off from. Another marker was placed on the house where the Kamikaze idea was first broached by Rear Admiral Takijirō Ōnishi. These markers attracted Japanese tourists and put the area on the tourist map.<sup>22</sup>

The Japanese memorials were different from the Filipino and American memorials in that they were also religious shrines, and not just historical in nature. Visiting Japanese brought gifts for Filipinos where the memorials were erected, and tried to get them to maintain the memorials. Some were seen as tourist attractions, but for most Filipinos the significance of the memorials declined as the years passed. A study on one Japanese memorial in Negros Oriental revealed that few residents knew what the shrine was all about. As it was high on a hill, Filipino veterans did not make the trek after a few years, being old; the younger Filipinos did not see the need to climb up since the Japanese did not give gifts as they had given before. Comments as to why Filipinos allowed the shrine to be built ranged from forgiveness to forgetfulness to understanding that during a time of war, atrocities happen to money making ventures with the Japanese.<sup>23</sup> The same can be probably said for Filipino views of Japan and the war.

It was at this time that the last Japanese straggler in the Philippines officially surrendered. Lt. Hiroo Onoda, after receiving orders from his commanding officer, surrendered and was given a hero's welcome by Marcos in the presidential palace. The war was thus brought back to the forefront of public awareness.

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morial at Caliraya, see Jintaro Ishida, *The Remains of War: Apology and Forgiveness* (Quezon City: Megabooks Company, 2001), pp. 266–274.

21 List of Japanese memorials in *Shūroku Ruson*, No. 11, August 1988, pp. 2–25. Some more were put up later; some are not in this list. A number have ceased to exist or are difficult to locate now.

22 “Surviving Kamikaze Men Due Here,” *Bulletin Today* 7 March 1975, p.31. An earlier group came in 1974, by which time the Kamikaze East airfield marker was already up. “Kamikaze Birthplace Attracts Japanese, American Tourists,” *Bulletin Today* 7 August 1974, p. 14.

23 Jocelyn S. dela Cruz, “The Sagbang War Memorial Shrine: A Case Study of Local Level Philippine-Japan Relations.” Unpublished, nd c. 1998 or 1999.

Japanese Prime Minister Nakasone visited the Philippines and is quoted as having said that he felt very welcome in the Philippines. What is significant is that Nakasone had been stationed in Davao as a junior naval officer during the war—and was not criticized for this.<sup>24</sup>

The erection of the Caliraya memorial and the various Japanese memorials attracted Japanese tours to these spots; this tied up with the government's tourism program to attract tourists to visit the Philippines. The Department of Tourism began to put up its own markers, huge blue billboards which sometimes obscured the site or earlier and more informative markers.

Tourism was a big program of the Marcos administration, and in 1977 Marcos announced a Reunion for Peace program, and invited all veterans to visit the Philippines. It would be an opportunity to showcase the gains of the Philippines under Martial law and serve to boost tourism as well. Americans, Japanese, Australians—anyone who had fought in the Philippines during the war was invited to a reunion of former warriors, where they could “meet in brotherhood and, together, recalling the sadness of the past and enjoying the joys of the present, draw fresh vigor for their dedication to the cause of peace.” Apart from the year being the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bataan, Marcos noted that the former protagonists were then dedicated to remind mankind of the futility of war as a solution to international differences; that the Philippines was committed to peace and world brotherhood especially after experiencing the devastation, as well as post-war assistance from the former protagonist nations; and “whereas the world situation today is such as to compel all nations of the world to remind themselves anew of the wastefulness and pain of war.” Incentives such as discounts on air tickets, hotels and others were offered to veterans or their families. Marcos pointed out that “the Philippines happens, in the past, to be one of the arenas of conflict and suffering but now a present crucible of international efforts to peacefully uplift a nation.”<sup>25</sup>

Bataan Day 1977—the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the surrender—was unique in that the ceremonies saw the participation of Filipinos, Americans and Japanese. Previous celebrations had excluded the Japanese; this time three groups of buses rendezvoused at the top of Mount Samat and all three groups participated in the commemorative ceremonies.

Other commemorations were lavish affairs; that in Leyte was participated in by Americans, Filipinos, Japanese, Australians and others who were involved in the battles for the island. A full scale reenactment of the landing was held, and formal ceremonies were held near the larger-than-life size statues of Gen. MacArthur, Pres. Osmena and their landing party. VIPs were housed in the plush MacArthur Park hotel. Of course, it helped that Marcos' wife, Imelda, was from Leyte.

The Japanese war tours peaked in 1977, because aside from the Reunion for Peace program, it was the 33<sup>rd</sup> year after the battle—a significant year in the Buddhist calen-

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24 Nakano, pp. 340–341.

25 Letter of Instruction No. 331, signed 29 October 1975 by Ferdinand E. Marcos (mimeographed). Also see Reunion for Peace brochure issued by the Department of Tourism, 1977. LOI 331–A, 9 April 1976, made these benefits applicable to Filipino veterans, too.

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Complementing the government commemorations were private initiatives, among them, the unveiling of a Bataan monument in the business district of Makati. (Because of development, this was moved to the Philippine Army Headquarters in Fort Bonifacio.) A veterans center—which would later include a museum and library—was established. New memorials were put up in various towns and provinces, one of the larger ones being the Panay War Memorial in Jaro, Iloilo, a memorial to the guerrilla resistance movement.

Even during martial law, anti-American sentiment continued—outside the cities, through the Communist New People's Army. Critics against martial law and its checkered record began to make themselves heard through a rising alternative press. The question of why the Philippines celebrated defeats again came up. Apparently in response to this, Marcos first changed the name Bataan Day (April 9) to Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor). Since these questions continued on, Marcos moved the Day of Valor from Bataan Day to Corregidor Day (May 6) in 1979. Although the fall of Corregidor was another defeat, it fell in between the fall of Bataan and the victory at Bessang Pass (June 14). Also, it could be rationalized that Corregidor led to the victories at the Coral Sea and Midway because of messages intercepted in Corregidor's codebreaking tunnel. Bessang Pass, aside from being a significant guerrilla victory, was also supposedly where Marcos won a number of his medals. Bataan Day, a national holiday since the 1950s, ceased to become a holiday.

The first commemoration of Araw ng Kagitingan on May 6, 1980 was held at Fort Santiago—where the Kempeitai had their headquarters during the war. Marcos' speech was less one of history and memory, but more of current national policies, particularly against war and at the same time to hold the country's territorial sovereignty sacred. Wreaths were laid by the American and Japanese ambassadors; U.S. Ambassador Richard Murphy recognized Filipino nationalism, which was needed to make Philippines strong. He also stated that the special relations between the U.S. and the Philippines had ended, and both were now on a relationship of mutual trust and confidence. These speeches were considerably different from those delivered a few years earlier; they also reflected the recent U.S. policy of averting a third world war with the help of allies. Japanese ambassador Hideho Tanaka announced that the world seemed to be in turmoil and "we must renew our resolve not to create a situation which may develop into another war." As for Japan itself: "We shall never cause war in the future."<sup>27</sup>

Becoming, in a sense, an artificial holiday, it did not strike the veterans groups of the public at large as very significant, since the reasons for it were now many and not focused. In fact, despite the official celebration of Araw ng Kagitingan, veterans groups would still observe Bataan Day and Bessang Pass Day separately.

The major observation of war commemorations was from 1982 to 1985, this being the fortieth anniversary of the war. The ceremonies for Bataan Day 1982 were again big affairs, involving almost all arms of government and the veterans organizations. Veterans and dignitaries from abroad were invited to attend, and as in 1967, there were exhibits, dinners, new memorials (including "eternal gratitude memorials for the towns which

26 Nakano, p. 365

27 "FM Stresses RP's policy against war," *Daily Express*, 7 May 1980, pp. 1, 6.

aided death marchers in 1942), formal dinners and so on. Again, Japanese, Americans and Filipinos attended major functions, but not everything worked out as planned. At Mount Samat, some Filipino veterans reached out shook hands with the Japanese while others stayed back; the Americans steered clear of the Japanese. The organizers of the event sought to bring all sides together under one roof for lunch, but this did not go as planned as some American veterans walked out of the venue, refusing to be with the Japanese. Despite forty years, animosity was still there.

Speeches again told of courage and valor—and U.S.-Philippine ties. But included also was mention of Philippine-Japan relations and friendship. It was about this time that Japanese atrocities were apparently played down in some markers, the Japanese text of which omitted any mention of these. As for the veterans, there was less of veterans benefits and honors, and more of what role the veterans could play in building the so-called New Society.

It might be pointed out that the United States Information Service aided in these commemorations by issuing brochures and sponsoring exhibits and film showings. The Japanese Information and Cultural Center, understandably, did not participate.

Other memorials of note which notable was the deck gun of the *Oryoku Maru*, a Hell Ship sank off Olongapo, in the U.S. Veterans of Foreign Wars office in Olongapo City; guerrilla memorials in provinces like Bulacan; a war memorial park in Lingayen featuring a couple of tanks and a plane with Japanese markings mistakenly identified as a Zero. (The plane was a U.S. T-6 Texan trainer and the tanks were late war U.S. light tanks.)

The Leyte commemoration in 1984 was again a big affair, with commemorative stamps, exhibits and a reenactment of the U.S. landing with U.S. and Philippine armed forces cooperating. As with previous commemorations, this was seen as an opportunity to advertise the gains Leyte had made—in industry, tourism and other fields. It was also used for ground breaking ceremonies at National Maritime Polytechnic Complex, financed by Japan. Markers were installed, joint U.S.-Japan-Philippine programs were held, but the arrival times of the guests were timed so they would not be in the airport at the same time.<sup>28</sup>

As the veterans were by this time growing old, they began organizing Sons and Daughters associations to be able to carry on the task.

War memories would however be clouded by cynicism and disappointment. The exposure of corruption and cronyism in Marcos' administration, as well as human rights abuses dealt serious credibility blows to Marcos. These issues, topped off with charges that Marcos' medals were fake,<sup>29</sup> tainted World War II commemorations, which were seen as part of an administration that was crumbling. The younger generation, which had not experienced the war first hand, looked with suspicion and disbelief at some of the commemorations, also criticizing them as a waste of money, and a sign of colonial mentality.

28 *Peace and Progress: 40<sup>th</sup> Leyte Landing Anniversary* (Tacloban: Leyte Provincial Government, 1994).

29 In 1982, the small newspaper *We Forum* published a series of articles alleging Marcos' medals were not genuine. Marcos responded by closing the newspaper. The resulting public outcry, however, prevented Marcos from going further and jailing the staff.

With Japan as a major economic partner, and investment pouring in, some also felt it unwise to bring out stories of Japanese atrocities.

Some of the war movies during this time carried on old themes. *Mariveles* told of valor in Bataan and in the guerrillas, but again showed the stereotypical image of the Japanese. Two movies, however, stood out. *Tatlong Taong Walang Diyos* (Three Years without God) brought out the human side of one Japanese, despite the atrocities and fears brought about by other Japanese. *Oro, Plata, Mata* (Gold, Copper, Death), set in the island of Negros, showed the travails of one sugar planter family—their descent from riches to poverty, forced evacuations and shortages of all kinds. Interestingly, the Japanese do not appear as villains—rival guerrilla groups are those who are cast as the villains.

There were at least two TV series which dealt with the war, one a Tagalog adaptation of a classic novel of the war in the island of Panay, *Without Seeing the Dawn* (*Malayo Pa ang Umaga* was the title of the TV series). The other, *Fort Santiago*, showed Filipino fortitude and courage in the hands of the Kempeitai, and was supposed to have been based on true stories. However, possibly because the government did not want to displease the Japanese, this series was pulled off the air.

By 1985, the last full year of Marcos' administration, ceremonies were held to commemorate the liberation of Manila and Los Banos, among others. Marcos again (in the Manila event) spoke of government polices and the need for self reliance, and did not address the battle much, or U.S.-Philippine relations. Instead, he said: "No longer must we depend on the old certainty of powerful friends coming to our aid in time of peril. It is not that we do not trust them. It is just that the world is changing so that they may not be able to come to our aid. No longer can we trust our destiny to the magnanimity of allies, nor to the concerted action of a family of nations aligned on our side.

In every crisis a country must stand or fall alone. This seems to be the stark reality of our day and age. That is why self-reliance is central and current to our problems nowadays."<sup>30</sup>

In February 1986, Marcos was overthrown after an almost bloodless revolution.

### **Looking back, moving further: 1986 onwards to the fiftieth anniversary**

The downfall of Marcos brought in the first woman president of the Philippines: Corazon C. Aquino, the daughter in law of a prominent wartime collaborationist although the younger generation did not know this too well. Despite this, and a seemingly close bias to Japan, from whom she expected much assistance, Aquino did more for the veterans and some World War II commemorations than Marcos in his last years in power.

The same year she took office, Aquino assigned the Department of Tourism to develop Corregidor as a war memorial and tourist spot. The Corregidor Foundation, Inc., was created to oversee this task, which included upgrading facilities, putting up a light and sound presentation in Malinta Tunnel, systematizing tourist spots, constructing a Filipino War Memorial and marketing the island better. This removed the island from the Military Shrines office of the Department of National Defense, to take a more active stance in

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30 *40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Liberation of Manila* booklet (Manila: National Media Production Center, 1985).

developing the island. It was timed to be ready by 1992, the fiftieth anniversary of the fall. Part of the island was designated a tourist zone, to be developed with modern facilities, while other parts were to be the memorial zone, with existing structures and ruins refurbished and preserved. The Japanese memorial would be segregated and centralized in where the Japanese dead had been buried right after the battle. Corregidor was dubbed as the Island of Valor, Peace and International Understanding, and regular tours were set in place, as they still are today.<sup>31</sup>

Aquino also restored Araw ng Kagitingan to April 9, a day more meaningful to the veterans and the people. In order to dampen criticisms of commemorating defeats, she also expanded the period to one week to be known as Veterans Week, so that veterans from all wars could be honored. As it was carried out, the week started with a sunrise ceremony; wreath layings, mass at the Libingan ng mga Bayani; formal ceremonies at Bataan and a pilgrimage to Corregidor; symposia, exhibits and a final sunset ceremony, parade and candle lighting ceremony. Aquino launched a fund drive for veterans in 1990 and capped the ceremonies with signing into law the Veterans Code, which increased the benefits to Filipino veterans.<sup>32</sup>

As the nation was in a critical state at this time—with a crippled economy, serious social inequality and the threat of coups—Aquino's speeches in the memorial ceremonies called for modern day heroes to stand up to oppression, but also appealed for greater recognition for the veterans.<sup>33</sup>

Because of the coup attempts and perceived political instability, the number of veterans groups coming from Japan decreased, particularly after a Japanese businessman was kidnapped in a high profile case. American veterans grew fewer, too, as they grew older and travel became difficult. The commemorations thus became more Filipino oriented, unlike the big international affairs they were in the 1970s and early 1980s.

Aquino needed support from Japan and visited Japan officially twice. The Emperor reputedly apologized to her very profusely for the war, but this was denied by the official palace spokesmen. Japan was increasingly important to the Filipinos also because numerous Filipinos were going to Japan to find work. Thus, there would be little government criticism for Japan's war conduct, textbooks, comfort women and Yasukuni Shrine.<sup>34</sup>

Even if there was no outright criticism of Japan, various groups commemorated the Death March—from boy scouts, to historians to concerned Japanese professors and their students (who called it a March for Life).<sup>35</sup>

31 *Salute to the Retaking of Corregidor Island* (Manila: Philippine Information Agency, nd c. 1991); *Corregidor: Island of Valor, Peace and International Understanding* (Manila: Department of Tourism, 1989).

32 Criticism concerning the commemoration of Bataan day continued to appear, alleging that Filipinos loved failure. See, for example, letter to editor by Rodolfo Arizala, *Manila Bulletin*, 11 April 1992, p. 7. The *Philippine Graphic* reprinted Quijano de Manila's controversial piece at this time.

33 Presidential Proclamation 466, signed 14 September 1989; "Vets Week under Way," *Bulletin Today*, 9 April 1990; "Fall of Bataan Recalled," *Bulletin Today*, 9 April 1990, p. 1.

34 Nakano, pp. 338–339

35 "Fall of Bataan Recalled," *Bulletin Today*, 9 April 1990, p. 1; "Death March Retraced," *Bulletin Today*, 15 April 1990.



Some of the old signs of war had been demolished. The restoration of Intramuros and Fort Abad in the 1970s removed pockmarks and destruction from 1945. Some buildings are still in use, such as Bilibid Prison and Muntinglupa prison, which were used by the Japanese for housing POWs and suspected guerrillas. These are, however, dilapidated and have no historical markers—and face the danger of being torn down, as have other historic sites, such as Fort Bonifacio

Other memorials were put up, among them the 41<sup>st</sup> Division Shrine, the only division shrine in the country, containing the names of all its members. Sunken Japanese ships off the island of Busuanga were marketed for underwater diving tours. As the Death March markers put up in 1967–1968 fell into disrepair and rotted or vanished, a new group, the Fil-American Memorial Endowment Foundation (FAME) was created to restore or replace the Death March markers and help preserve Corregidor and other World War II sites.

The Philippines having moved beyond close ties with the U.S. and Japan, some World War II sites would also have additional memorials for events before World War II, such as the Spanish legacy in Corregidor.

Although Aquino may not have wanted to confront the Japanese with their wartime atrocities, she could not escape the fact that she would have to face the fiftieth anniversary of World War II. She issued a proclamation which declared December 8, 1991 to December 8, 1992 as a commemorative period for the observation of the fiftieth anniversary of World War II in the Philippines. The theme adopted was : Kagitingan, Kapayapaan Kaunawaan—Valor, Peace and Understanding.<sup>36</sup>

The commemorative year started with a formal ceremony at Malacanang Palace and the presentation of commemorative stamps on December 8, 1991. Aquino's speech was a pledge to international understanding. "We are here to denounce war as an instrument to settle international differences. We are here to pledge ourselves once more to international understanding. We are here to commit ourselves to world peace. But we are also here to celebrate the Filipino veterans' courage; to remind all that the Filipino is ready to offer his life for his country whenever necessary." She also emphasized the steps needed to give the veterans more benefits.<sup>37</sup> Close ties with the U.S. were barely mentioned, because the U.S. bases treaty had just been terminated by the Philippine Senate, thus causing a rift.

At the same ceremony, the Japanese ambassador (Toshio Goto) expressed "deep remorse" for WWII.<sup>38</sup>

The 1992 Veterans week were typical of previous commemorations, but was more subdued and overshadowed by political developments and the forthcoming election. The lasting contributions were to be a large memorial in the former prison camp at Capas, Tarlac, and a massive sculpture commemorating a battle at the entrance to Bataan. Both of these would be finished after Aquino's term, however. (And the sculpture would be grossly inaccurate.)<sup>39</sup>

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36 Proclamation 758, signed 12 July 1991; Memo Order 344 series. 1991.

37 *DBC Golden Anniversary Souvenir Publication*, pp. 4–6

38 *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 9 December 1991.

39 *DBC Golden Anniversary Souvenir Publication*, pp. 7–8.

Fidel V. Ramos succeeded Aquino as president, and under him the country would formally observe the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of the Philippines and the end of the war. Ramos being a former military officer and veteran (albeit Korean War), he pushed for big commemorations of the fiftieth anniversary. His speeches, however, departed still further from the historical events and became more of policy statements or state of the nation addresses. His Bataan Day 1993 speech, for example focused on the fight against poverty, national stagnation, ignorance, criminality, corruption, divisiveness and environmental degradation, with Filipinos being called on to show heroism. Not just the heroism of 1942, but also the heroism of 1986.<sup>40</sup>

The fiftieth anniversary rites for the various liberation events were well planned and given much press coverage. The Americans were back in the picture even if the bases were gone; and other governments such as Japan and Australia joined in. Many reenactments were held, veterans were honored, and U.S.-Philippine friendship, as well as Australian and Japanese friendships, were recognized.

In the media there was some criticism of the U.S., even after the bases. Overly nationalistic commentators argued that the Filipinos had freed themselves by the time the Americans came back, a view not supported by fact, but popular among nationalists, who still clamored against neo-colonialism. The claim also was raised that it was the Americans who devastated Manila, one which is too simplistic but easy for ideologues to accept. The liberation commemorations were seen as too pro-American, and some of the critics felt vindicated when, in the Leyte reenactment, the actor playing MacArthur slipped and stumbled into the water. It seemed like poetic justice, the humbling of a major superpower, particularly since the whole world was watching.

The ceremonies in 1995 went on according to plan in various parts of the country, culminating in the surrender of General Yamashita and other parts of the Philippines; there were no more slip ups as in the Leyte landing, but the damage had been done and the events were not as dramatic. Ramos speeches "tied past and present together by paying tribute to the wartime heroes from both countries and calling for 'modern heroes' in all parts of society who would be able to move the Philippines forward. Apart from the parades, veterans reunions and fireworks, there were sports competitions, and U.S. servicemen donated sporting equipment and schoolbooks to schools. The U.S. embassy sponsored a special exhibit and documentaries were shown."<sup>41</sup>

At about this time, the Veterans Federation of the Philippines started an oral history project, recognizing the need for documenting key veterans' experiences. A veterans museum and library was also opened, focusing on World War II exploits.

But even with all these activities, the official ceremonies neglected one sector: the civilians who died. In the 1990s, a organization called Memorare Manila 1945 was formed, a civilian association of survivors of the battle of Manila. The aim of this group was to "honor the victims by keeping alive their memory, by collecting eyewitness ac-

40 *DBC Newsletter*, June 1993, pp. 13-14.

41 *Asiatic-Pacific Defense Forum*, Winter 1994-1995: *Special Supplement—Liberation of the Philippines 50 Years Ago*. Summary of the commemorative events in *Alab ng Puso: The Filipinos in World War II* (Quezon City: Department of National Defense, n.d., c., 1996).

counts and depositing them in archives, by encouraging the publication of books and articles regarding this aspect of the liberation of Manila, by encouraging the creation of similar societies elsewhere in the country and, by putting up appropriate memorials whenever and wherever possible.”<sup>42</sup> In February 1995, Memorare organized several masses to remember the civilian dead, and put up a memorial inside Intramuros, where hundred had been killed. They also got several articles on the battle published, to bring out the civilian side of the war.

During or just after the fiftieth anniversary commemorations, additional memorials were put up, such as the one to General Vicente Lim in Manila. The one thousand peso note carries with it the faces of three World War II heroes killed by the Japanese; this is still in use today. Commemorative stamps were issued. Other means of commemoration were the naming of streets after heroes, but after naming the street no further explanation was done, and the younger generation does not know who these people were.

### **Twenty-first century: sixtieth anniversary**

With the turn of the new century, Bataan day continued to be observed. In 2000, to add a twist to the commemoration, an activist priest, Fr. Robert Reyes, ran the route of the death march to garner attention and support for the veterans. This was called *Takbo ng Buhay* (Run for Life), and coincided with the unveiling of a new monument along the death march route.<sup>43</sup>

In 2003, the Capas Shrine was further developed with the opening of a Wall of Heroes, on which are inscribed the names of some of those who fought in Bataan. The official ceremonies, however, dwelt more on the war against terror than the historical significance of the memorial and the actions it memorialized.

Ironically, while the programs were supposed to honor the veterans, they usually turned into political speeches hardly related to the events being commemorated. The veterans would usually be left in the hot sun waiting for the VIPs to arrive, and then await their boxed lunches. Sadly, they would usually be relegated to background. It did mean free food and free trips for them, although more trying now that they are advanced in age.

At least, programs organized by the veterans sometimes gave some of them the opportunity to speak and share their stories. The children and grandchildren of one divisional unit responded by composing a song thanking the veterans for everything they had done.

Despite the number of memorials and markers existing today, there are still many sites and groups not represented. The Comfort Women were honored with a marker by the City of Manila in cooperation with nongovernment organizations assisting the women.

Planning for the sixtieth anniversary commemorations started late, and suffered from failing to consult the right persons or groups. There was initially no initiative from top levels of government, and it seems some push had to come from the U.S. embassy. A joint multi-agency was formed, but it was late and the choice of events haphazard. Some

42 Preface in Antonio Perez de Olaguer (English translation by Trinidad Ongtangco Regala), *Terror in Manila: February 1945* (Manila: Memorare Manila 1945 Foundation, 2005), p. i.

43 *The Defenders*, January–February 2000, p. 1.

of the planning was tainted by politics and suffered from lack of funds. Even so, several commemorations have been carried out. What the government missed out was filled in by veterans groups and private organizations like Memorare and local historical societies, such as those in Bamban, Tarlac and Legaspi, Legaspi.

Not commemorated, with no marker or memorial, are a number of events in the war. There is nothing commemorating officially the Japanese-sponsored republic under President Jose P. Laurel. Neither is there anything to show where the pro-Japanese groups such as the Makapili were formed or operated. This is understandable since these are things most Filipinos are not proud of; but they are part of history nevertheless.

Where the formal commemorations are quiet, the movies filled up some of the void. In the last five years, five war movies were made, dealing with different themes. One, *Yamashita: The Tiger's Treasure*, dealt with the story of the alleged treasure, based on the story of one who claims to have seen it. Using high-tech simulations, it was advertised as being accurate, although the plot itself may have been questionable.

The second, *Gatas—Sa Dibdi ng Kaaway* (Milk—In the Breast of the Enemy) is a tale of how a Japanese officer sired a son in the Philippines. The mother dies, however, and a Filipina is given the task of feeding the baby. She has to do this in order to protect her brother who is a guerrilla. The issues of collaboration, crossing cultural differences and so on are taken up.

The third movie, *Markova*, is about homosexuality and a so-called "Comfort Gay," based on a supposed actual experience. (The real Markova died only recently in an accident.) Similar to this is a movie which was released just last year, entitled *Aishite imasu 1941*, about a cross-dresser in a small town with whom a Japanese officer falls in love.

The last movie, *Panaghoy sa Suba*, is set in Bohol island and attempts to show the reality of guerrilla life. These movies venture into themes not taken up by formal commemorations or histories.

Sixty years have now passed since the end of World War II, and we have seen how the commemorations have changed with time. We have also seen how movies reflected different views of the war, particularly those not usually brought out in the formal commemorations or memorials or histories. The commemorations, memorials and movies, while all dealing with the war, vary in content and treatment and in their own way reveal the changing memories of the war.