

“NO SURRENDER”*

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Some countrymen of mine, impatient at, and unsatisfied with, the progress thus far of the present war in so far as the Philippines is concerned, are wondering why I did not surrender as several other public officials have done. For my personal convenience, it would be best for me, they believe, to give up the hopeless resistance, and come out of my hideout in the mountains to live in the city in peace and comfort. They also say that for the sake of the civilian population, it would be advisable for me to turn over the reins of the provincial government to the Japanese-sponsored regime, which would be in a better position, they claim, to maintain peace and order, and to promote the general well-being than a civil government operating with obviously great difficulty in view of pressure of constant enemy punitive expeditions. My surrender, they assert finally, would mean the end of the war, or the horrors of it, at least, in so far as we of this province are concerned.

Far from impeaching the motives of these countrymen of mine, among whom are counted some of my best friends, but grateful ever for the kindly spirit of solicitude which they entertain for my welfare and for the fate of the masses of this province, I must say, however, that the reasons they press forth for my surrender are found to be lacking in substance when viewed in the light of a clear and impartial analysis of the facts and issues involved in the present struggle. It is self-evident that in this war, as in any other conflict of nations in the past, the matter of personal safety or self-convenience is out of the question. When countless others, without distinction of rank or condition in life, are giving their full measure

* One of the many documents in the C.P.U. collection; heretofore unpublished — Editor.

of immolation on the field of battle in the defense of our country against the invaders, there is no sensible reason whatsoever why the governor of this province should withhold from the motherland the sacrifice of such a small matter as personal convenience. Surely, it is not becoming to the dignity of the exalted position which I now occupy to hold the safety of my person over and above the future of the people who have elevated me to the seat of power not merely to serve them, as it is my solemn duty to do, but also to provide them with the guidance and inspiration which they so sorely need in this their dark hour of great perplexity. For me to surrender now would be to invite upon myself the charge of moral cowardice, for which I shall ever be stigmatized even long after my body shall have crumbled into dust.

As for the civilian population, I must say, modesty aside, that I yield to no man in my solicitude for the happiness and comfort of the masses, to whom I owe much for what I am now or ever hope to be in public life. It must also be stated here, for purposes of record, that long before the Japanese invasion forces landed in this province, I, as governor thereof, have taken every precaution to insure the safety and well-being of the people in the face of a terrible national emergency, so that when the inevitable really happened, the inhabitants were more or less prepared to meet the difficulties which they have foreseen the war will bring to all concerned. In their hide outs, they live without much of the facilities for comfort which they were used to enjoy in their former homes; but still they go through the ordeal with Spartan courage, and are happy in the thought that what the future has in store for them is worth all that sacrifice. To the people, as well as it is to me, nothing is more certain than the defeat, sooner or later, of the enemy who has invaded our shores, raided and ravished our homes, robbed and raped our women, and committed all manner of atrocities upon our innocent citizenry; and to all of us, Japan's complete debacle would be a glorious event to witness, even if we have to wait for that hour in long moments of suffering in our improvised thatch-roofed huts in the heart of the

hills and forests of the land. Therefore, for me to surrender now is to undermine the morale of the people and to shake their faith in that ultimate victory for which they have endured so much and suffered so long.

As for the assertion that the surrender of the governor would mean the end of the war, or the horrors of it at least, in so far as the Province of Iloilo is concerned, it is only fair to recall that this war has just begun and will not be over until the serpent of militarism which has raised its head in Asia and Europe shall have been crushed under the heel of the forces of freedom forever. Viewed in the light of the tremendous proportions which the present titanic struggle has taken, it would be no more right to say that the surrender of the governor of Iloilo would put an end to it, than it would be to expect that a tiny pebble thrown in midstream would stop the onrush of a mighty river flood.

In the other parts of the Philippines, our good people there are continuing their struggle against the common enemy, with full knowledge of the odds they are up against. Are the people of the Province of Iloilo so lacking in the fervor of their devotion to our country that, unlike our brave brothers in the other provinces where resistance to the enemy is being stubbornly carried out, they are all too ready to give up in expectation for a chimerical respite from the horrors of the war? Of course, the war is almost unbearable; it breaks my heart to think that none of us, whether young or old, will be spared from its horrible effects as long as it lasts. But we must be able to see what many of our courageous countrymen have already discerned; namely: That the tide of battle is turning in our favor and the dawn of victory is breaking right after the darkest hour of our night. It would be most unwise for me and for all of us to give up while the prospect of national deliverance is in sight.

To all these considerations I might add as a reminder that the seat of the Civil Government of the Philippines is in Washington, D.C., and until that supreme authority so commands, I will never consent to surrender.

But there are other underlying motives which impel

me not to surrender to the Japanese authorities. One of these is, that I, as one of the leaders of the masses in this part of the Philippines, would not be adding anything to the honor of that great trust were I to lead the people on their knees in meek submission to the Japanese militarists. Were I to surrender now when the people of this province are stubbornly resisting subjugation by the invaders and just when the fortunes of the war are rapidly turning in our favor, my action would be interpreted as a betrayal of a public trust, an act tantamount to high treason which, when the dust of battle shall have cleared off, shall undoubtedly leave me high and dry on the barren rocks of infamy.

But the most important consideration of all is that a great issue is at stake in this war. It is whether all that we cherish of liberty and democracy which have been vouchsafed to us by our forbears amidst tears and blood shall give way to the rule of steel and fire under an Emperor and his clique of saber rattlers who exercise their power of life and death over their subjects without disguise or discrimination. For me to surrender now before the issue has been finally decided is not only to surrender every principle or conviction that has been woven into the very fabric of our political life, but also to allow the hand of the Japanese military power, at present being directed at our throat, to stifle the voice of the people so that their will might not be heard.

It is futile to drown the issue in a flood of false enemy pretensions, one of which is, that the Japanese are here to free our country from the bondage of American domination. It is an open secret that these back-stabbing Japanese militarists, in their march of aggression against weak and innocent neighbors, leave in their wake a blaze of their own promises sadly broken by them. To surrender to them now, in the hope that they will do the right thing by us, as they pretend to do, is to become an accomplice to a treacherous plot of national deception.

Another reminder which is not often openly broached for fear of irritating the much bloated egotism of the Japanese, is being urged, namely: That America is going

to win the war anyway; therefore, the surrender of the governor will not in any manner militate against the issue at stake, inasmuch as America will restore to us the liberties which the invaders have temporarily taken away. But it is precisely because America is going to win the war that there is no sense in surrendering; for to do so in exchange for a temporary local truce while in the other parts of our country and of the world the enemy is carrying on his acts of barbarous cruelty, is not only to cast doubt and suspicion on the loyalty of the inhabitants of this province to the common cause but also to invite discredit on the good name of our people in general.

Now for a final word. Long before the war broke out, I have searched my conscience for the purpose of discovering where my duty lies, should this country become involved in the maelstrom of this colossal world chaos. The quest was soon ended, and ever since the time when the storm broke loose with all its fury upon us, the way has all been clear as crystal to me. It lies on the rough and rugged road of the Calvary of resistance; but it is the way of honor and victory. So that we may tread this path together, I have repeatedly asked the people of this province to follow me; and they have responded so sublimely that I am eternally grateful. But should the war last a little longer, it would be no wonder to me if some of my countrymen were to become weary of the struggle, while others, yielding to temptations of one form or another, might falter or would be constrained to give up the journey altogether. Even then, I must continue to exhort them to carry on, in the hope that I might be able to rekindle their enthusiasm and to renew their strength for the attainment of our common goal. However, should circumstances beyond our control force me to bear the cross alone, I am ready to accept the burden and follow the path where my duties lies, for it is there where my conscience leads me.