

## A SOLDIER OF THE REVOLUTION

By: Captain Isidro Wenceslao  
(as told to Arturo M. Misa)

ThisWeek

Vol. 13, No. 48, Nov. 30, 1958.

p. 22 - 25.

MARCH 22, 1896, is a day that shall always be etched in my memory. For on this date I took my oath as a full-fledged member of the "Balagay Uliran," a Katipunan unit located in San Nicolas, Bulacan, before serious-minded officials of the organization, after having gone through a series of rigid tests that I never thought I could hurdle.

Doroteo Karagdag, the top-ranking official of the "Balagay Uliran," shook my hand and warmly embraced me while the tears of joy that I could no longer contain trickled down my cheeks for being accepted to the brotherhood of brave, patriotic men, whose sole motive was the salvation of their enslaved motherland.

On June 1896, my books and personal belongings securely packed in my suitcase, I took a Manila-bound carriage to resume my studies at the "Escuela Normal de Maestros" operated by Jesuit fathers.

The discovery of the existence of the Katipunan by military authorities, as a consequence of the revelation made by Teodoro Patimo's sister to the parish priest of Tondo Church (Padre Mariano Gil) that a plot was being hatched by the secret society to overthrow the government, disrupted my ambition to become a maestro.

Close on the heels of the unfortunate discovery of the Katipunan was my decision to quit my studies so as to devote my full time to the furtherance of the cause we championed. Returning to Barrio Pitpitan, my birthplace, I found that a hornets nest had been stirred, thereby the confessional incident.

Julian H. del Pilar darted to and from the houses of Katipuneros, in Pitpitan, sounding them out as to whether they were agreeable to the idea of going to Barrio Msukol, in Paombong, Bulacan, to join the three thousand-strong Katipunan band headed by Isidoro Torres. At a meeting held at his house to discuss the matter, I saw friends from my boyhood days.

Gathered around a large mahogany table were Decadato Manahan, Bonifacio Morelos, Vicente Manahan, Felix de Jesus, and Gregorio H. del Pilar, the youngest among the group (he was only eighteen years old), spiritedly discussing the unforeseen turn of events.

That same day- November 18, 1896- we started the two day trek to Barrio Masukol. When we bared our intention to serve under Torres, the middle-aged rebel was very pleased.

After carefully looking over the place, Gregorio del Pilar ventured to suggest that we return to Pitpitan at once, sensing that to stay at Masukol meant sure death, inasmuch as Torres' headquarters was vulnerable to attack. To his suggestion we all concurred, swayed by the forcefulness and soundness of his reason.

Two days later, a Spanish gunboat docked at the mouth of the Paombong River, unloading fully-equipped Casadores, who unleashed a furious attack that caught Torres' men unawares. The result was disastrous: when the smoke of battle cleared away only a handful remained of Torres once-glorious band. The survivors of the rout divided into two groups; the first proceeding to Kakarong, in Pandi, led by Eusebio Roque, alias "Maestrong Sebio," while the second group, headed by Torres, fled to Layang-layang, Norzagaray.

One of the lucky survivors, Mariano Gutierrez, limped home to Pitpitan, bearing the story of his near brush with death. How closely we had lost our lives, too, but for Gregorio del Pilar's advice! From that moment on Gregorio del Pilar commanded our respect, and we looked up to him as our natural leader.

When del Pilar broached the subject of joining Maestrong Sebio's force in Kakarong, on November 28, 1896, no one raised any objection. Once in Kakarong, which Del Pilar deemed the perfect rebel's lair, because of the tall trees that offered natural camouflage to the camp we had established