

AGUINALDO'S PLACE IN HISTORY

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Individuals... Caviteños divided themselves into two rival Katipunan factions, each vying to outdo the other. So far, the young mayor had not made himself a potential leader of Cavite. He and Candido Ibarra were far above him in leadership. There was, in fact no sign that young Aguinaldo would rise as the foremost leader of them all. Yet, at one stroke he succeeded in making himself the acknowledged leader in Cavite by the simple expedient of leading an assault group against the Spanish garrison a few days after the outbreak of the Revolution. For Aguinaldo, TIME may afford a man the long perspective to reinforce his belief in personal destiny, yet it also works in such mysterious ways as to make any man, whatever his antecedents, its own plaything. Thus, General Emilio Aguinaldo, having played his role of leader, patriot, and hero at the most critical moment of the country's history, has been victimized by time. His long life-span, more than half a century of which he spent in comparative quiet, with desultory excursions into politics, gave him sharp perspectives and tragic-comic memories which enriched his personal experiences, but which robbed him of the chance to make himself the foremost Filipino hero. Had he died in battle, had he fought back mercilessly when some of his own men sold him down the river at Palanan and died fighting to the last ditch, like his young rear-guard commander, Lizon, General Gregorio del Pilar, his monument today would have graced every town plaza. There was something in General Aguinaldo's destiny that marked him off, first, as a young upstart-able, patriotic, and even brilliant at times and, second, as a retired hero-quiet, unassuming, and calculating. Born into a family that was not distinguished either for intellectual attainments or for economic prominence, Aguinaldo tasted a little of Spanish education, taught for a while, and then took to commerce as a means of fortifying his family's sagging economy. He was until then an ordinary young man known only as straight-backed, quiet, and soft-spoken. And then the Katipunan, with its incendiary leaflets and revolutionary aims, extended its plebian arms to Cavite, where the tradition of robust manhood is expressed in deadly combats. It was the eve of the revolution against Spain, and Aguinaldo, having now achieved a sort of fame as a newly-elected headman of his town, took the first significant step in his life by enlisting as a member of the revolutionary secret society.

Individualistic to a certain extent, the Caviteños divided themselves into two rival ⁺atipunan factions, each vying to outdo the other. So far, the young mayor had not made himself conspicuous as a potential leader of Cavite. Mariano Alvarez, Baldomero Aguinaldo, and Candido Tirona were far above him in leadership. There was, in fact no sign that young Aguinaldo would rise as the foremost leader of them all. Yet, at one stroke he succeeded in making himself the acknowledged leader in Cavite by the simple expedient of leading an assault group against the Spanish garrison a few days after the outbreak of the Revolution. For Aguinaldo, it was the beginning of his rapid ascent in power. Thus the upstart.

Some heroes are the product of their time; others create the circumstances of their time; while still others are both creator and the progeny of their age. Aguinaldo was the creator of his age. Without any military education, his courage and fortitude led him to the arena where man's strength of character and physical endurance were tested. Circumstances, then, led him to develop his potential powers and to devise the means with which to translate latent possibilities into swift and meaningful action. Thus, the series of brilliant victories in Cavite marked him for future leadership not only in Cavite, but throughout the revolt-ridden areas of Central and Southern Luzon. The stage of creative activity had now shifted from organization to active military campaigns, and Aguinaldo, with an inherent capacity for military strategy, exceeded even his wildest dreams by putting the enemy on the run. Since November 9, 1896, when the battle of Binakayan was fought, Aguinaldo had made himself indispensable to the insurgents.

To a certain extent, his rise to power and popularity was tragic. For precisely because of this popularity, Bonifacio, the great organizer, saw his star sink into the horizon - never to rise again. It was, of course, through no fault of Aguinaldo that the supreme found himself displaced in the esteem of the Cavite revolutionists. With a man in their midst who had made the enemy feel the concentrated wrath of centuries of oppression it was inevitable that the Caviteños, like other Filipinos, should instinctively