

The Battle of Manila Of Memes and Memists

by

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Life is what happens to you while you are making other plans, wrote John Lennon, and this book is what happened to me when I started out to write a book about the Manila that my father had experienced in 1945.

In picturing Manila after the battle had run its course, I felt it would be improper not to stone the memes which have attached themselves to the topic and which seem, still yet, to be the éminence grise which obscure it as an example of the deliberate use of war crimes as a weapon of war.

I hope that these the book's images can assist students of the Battle in dealing with these memes.



Some surrenders were successful (Signal Corps)

Memes exist to transmit an element of culture or system of behaviour from one individual or generation to the next. They can pass a false element between generations just as easily, clouding, rather than clarifying understanding. The predominant fact about the Battle of Manila which appears to challenge people is in attempting to explain the pointless brutality of the Japanese forces. The meme holds it that inexperienced troops,

under the command of a rogue subordinate officer who considered himself independent of the Army chain of command and being unable to escape or surrender, ran amok and took their revenge upon the Filipinos who had foiled them.

That would be an easily understood explanation, were it true. It is, however, almost entirely wrong. History is not just about ascertaining facts, but about making judgments, and inaccuracies introduced by activist-driven revisionism (a notable meme generator) and influenced across the generational frontiers risks both of these functions.

Some years ago, I became involved in writing of another battle taking place at the same time as this, and not far from Manila, on Corregidor. Needing to address how the “fog of battle” distorts perceptions, not just of the participants themselves, but of history, I took advantage of correspondence between two of my friends, both of whom had been involved in that battle, and which I feel is worth the repetition:

"A long time ago I was on a troopship, the USS Eltinge ^[1] bound for Bremerhaven. Anticipating a dull trip I had a copy of Tolstoy's War and Peace which in most ways is a very dull book. What wasn't dull was his theory of the battle where he describes the action at Borodino not as

some great strategic clash that will decide the fate of Europe but thousands of small struggles among confused and bewildered soldiers who only know what is happening to them and a few of their comrades that are nearby. They are so confused that they never know whether they were brave or cowardly soldiers or whether they have properly done their duty because no one tells them except in a general way perhaps. Not only are they uncertain about the battle and even themselves, there is really no one to talk to about it unless they had experienced the same thing.^[2]

The retaking of Corregidor commencing 16 February 1945 had been a simple and brutish battle between two armed forces, each fighting without rules of engagement to the point of death or surrender. The Americans, attacking over the same ground the Japanese had attacked in 1942, and the Japanese, now defending what the Americans had surrendered in 1942, were the exclusive occupiers of a battlefield that contained no innocent bystanders. Almost thirty miles away, at the same time, America and Japanese forces, supported by their proxies, were fighting across an urban landscape overburdened by refugees and residents held hostage, each armed force fighting to entirely different purposes under vastly different rules of engagement. The course of that fighting would see a hundred thousand deaths, the great majority of them innocents taking no part in the battle. The Japanese conduct of the battle was itself one of the most criminally monstrous in a series of war crimes that successive Japanese governments have ignored to this day.

In dealing with issues of Japanese war guilt, for the Battle of Manila is laden with it, it is often pointed out by way of contrast that Germany has been able to admit its guilt, to apologise for it, and to move on. The Germans took the process of dealing with its National Socialist period so seriously, they even developed a word for it – *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*^[3] – best rendered

in English as "struggle to come to terms with the past." Germany has become a better place for having done so, and its citizenry better citizens of the European Union and of the world because they had been able to avoid the collective amnesia that dims issues as the years pass. But not the Japanese as a nation, which seems to have taken to national amnesia as if it were a virtue. Why did Japan take the opposite path? Japanese War Crimes didn't just span WWII as understood by western culture, but extended across Asia and the Pacific between 1931 and 1945. There does not appear to be any Japanese equivalent either to the word or the process of coming to terms with this past, for Japan has embraced denial to the extent that its central government has consistently discouraged its educational textbooks from dealing with issues of war guilt and war crimes, downplayed or even denied entirely issues of mass killings, human experimentation and biological warfare, murder and maltreatment of prisoners, cannibalism, forced slave labor, the kidnapping and coercion of women for their field brothel system, looting, and crimes against humanity as a terror weapon of war.

During the 1950s, the Japanese government, members of parliament, and private organisations waged a nationwide campaign for the release of war criminals held in custody at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo.[4] The basis of the campaign was that minor war criminals were victims of the war, not true criminals. Both conservatives and progressives supported it. Was it just the fear of financial repercussions, as has been alleged for the denial of the outrageous conduct of its military brothel system? Was it the fear that Unit 731's efforts at developing, testing and using of biological weapons of mass death might lead to a point at which the Emperor could be implicated? Was it something far more dangerous - that an acknowledgment of war crimes might get in the way of a very successful "Japan as victim" rehabilitation meme?



*It's a blow to the encirclement meme that the fires in North Manila began on or before the third of February.
(MacArthur Memorial Archives, City of Norfolk, USA)*

The issues start to multiply. In a belief system in which the Emperor has been God, does it become proper and moral to withhold the truth, and to give false evidence so as to protect that belief system? Was it to protect the extent and impact of the Imperial involvement that senior military commanders met what was - to them - an honourable death,^[6] and that this aim having been established by the 1950's, the Japanese saw no further point in guilt for war crimes being acknowledged or punished. I'll leave that for the sociologists. Among the Japanese people, the war crimes trials were, and still are, regarded as mock trials of little value. We are also at a point where, remarkably, legal papers abound in the United States academe seeking to establish a similar outcome.^[7]

This is not to suggest that all the modern Japanese are entirely supportive of the refusal

to admit wartime responsibility, although no candidate from the conservative ruling party could win an election by blaming Japan for its war of aggression. There has been a popular and academic reaction within Japan to the hard line rejection of responsibility, the downplaying of evidence of aggression and atrocity in its schools with sophistry and euphemism, and the "apologies to no one" attitude.^[8] The issue of Japanese war crimes has been pursued with academic rigor, fervour and commitment.^[9]

A significant part of Japan's social strength throughout the centuries, a foundation of Japanese society, has been the veneration of its ancestors and the maintenance of respect for the elder generation. What would have happened to the Japanese social fabric if the abominable truths of WWII had been allowed to escape into history there? Would the new

generation of Japanese children raised post-war have respected their soldier-fathers and their ancestral respect system, were they to discover that the objects of the respect had been the very same enactors of such an abominable system of intended, inhuman cruelty? Where would the ascetic traditions of the Samurai have been then? Whither Bushido? Was it necessary that for Japan's continuance as a homogeneous society that a few generations might be expediently lied to, misinformed or quarantined from the truth of the war? I believe that this is the *raison d'être* behind the Japanese domestic political policy denying its war guilt. The populace can believe what it wants to believe, but the official belief system must remain as the basis of Japanese homogeneity.

For the United States, the reduction of Japanese war guilt came from a different direction. By 1950, it had become desirable that Japan may become America's bastion of democracy against the development and expansion of communism in Asia. The judgment of history could wait, or even be delayed permanently if Japan were to remain useful to American political purposes. And so it did.



Survivors from Intramuros. (Signal Corps)

For the Filipino elite which had readily accommodated the Japanese occupation of its country, the *body politic* itself survived the disaster of the Battle of Manila largely intact.

Many had collaborated with the Japanese, in contrast with the vast peasant majority of the population of the country which had supported America in opposing the Japanese. By a combination of self-interest (both enlightened and otherwise), deft back-room political manipulation, entreaties to familial and class solidarity, the necessity of rebuilding the country, and not a little reliance upon *utang na loob*,^[10] the elite in the Philippines managed to redefine collaboration with the Japanese to the point at which, by 1948, it was argued to be a form of patriotism that prevented things, as black and bleak as they were, from being even worse. The oligarchy, which has essentially always controlled the Philippines, conferred upon themselves a blanket Amnesty in which all sins of collaboration were forgiven, without so much as a brief admission of guilt or expression of contrition. Thereafter, with the issues swept under the carpet, a quarantine of silence descended upon the issues of collaboration, with very little written about it, and even less taught of it in schools.^[11]

There is one law which an elite cannot repeal, that of the law of unintended consequences. The Amnesty of 1948 appears to have prevented the debate in the Philippines of whether readiness to collaborate (i.e. *the ends justify the means*) was at least a partial contributor to the social malaise of corruption in contemporary Filipino life.^[12]

Further diffusion comes to us courtesy of the way in which the War Crimes trials have been treated in a series of legal and socio-legal papers. One of the fundamental differences between the War Crimes trials, and criminal trials, is that the former were designed for the express purpose of getting at the truth (so as to punish the guilty) whereas trials in conventional American and English criminal courts are adversarial competitions between lawyers whose skill with legal artifice, the exclusion of and argument are more important than establishing the truth. It shouldn't come as a surprise, then, that A. Frank Reel's book, one of General Yamashita's legal team, and those which flow from it, read more like a

legal brief by a counsel who lost before the Supreme Court and wouldn't leave it alone than as an effort to establish what Yamashita truly did and where the law fell short in being able to convict him. History is about getting to the truth of things, and unfortunately for clarity there are too many law professors seeking to change today's laws than clarifying yesterday's truth.^[13] A law book should not be confused with a history book.

My aversion to smoke blowers would not be complete without mentioning those ever vocal members of the American self-criticism industry who just cannot allow anything positive to be said of America, particularly in the context of its conduct of the war when the shooting started, and of its ending over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I am indebted to my colleague Peter Parsons for his examination of the myths and facts in his Foreword.

The decision that there would be a Battle of Manila was not that of General Douglas MacArthur, who has even been criticized for planning a parade that could only be held had there been no battle. Some ^[14] MacArthur kickers have even gone to the extent of arguing that as MacArthur was motivated by personal ego to persuade President Roosevelt to retake the Philippines, and that the decision to retake the Philippines arose from personal ego rather than strategy, everything which happened thereafter in the Philippines was avoidable, and thus MacArthur's fault – but that's facile. I cannot help but allow MacArthur a few guest appearances here for, by 1945, the Filipinos saw him as the physical embodiment of the United States promise to return bringing liberty, a belief which never really has diminished over time. There were times when MacArthur, fully aware of this, used it shamelessly. It is, after all, from the playbook of all politicians to claim to become the embodiment of all hopes and desires, and MacArthur certainly could be political.

Nor was he beyond a little revisionism himself, some authors suggest, and there is much to commend them.^[15]

Nonetheless, the Philippines was an American responsibility, and until it could be given its independence in 1946, it was duty bound to defend what was, after all, American territory. While Americans frequently waxed eloquent about the Open Door and the sacredness of Chinese integrity, few Americans considered that East Asia was vital enough to justify the use of force.^[17] Indeed, the possession of the Philippines had inhibited the American diplomatic posture^[18], and at great cost, had preventing it from blocking Japan's expansionism in fear for the consequences.

Until war broke out in Europe, and there arose the necessity to contemplate the assistance of a besieged England, the United States had pursued a policy of minimizing liabilities which might embroil it in any confrontation. With the loss of the Philippines, retaking it became a moral responsibility that America could never have evaded except at the complete loss of reputation. MacArthur was the agent of the retaking, not the root cause of it.

Lieutenant General Yamashita Tomoyuki had been transferred out of China to the Philippines to put some "backbone" into its defense, because he had never been afraid to apply a heavy hand where he had considered it necessary.^[19]

He had been, after all, the "Tiger of Malaya" and not without a reputation for political ambition and as a duteous enforcer of the Imperial will. In the Philippines, though, Yamashita had been appointed as commanding general of the Fourteenth Army Group of the Imperial Japanese Army in the Philippine Islands from October 9, 1944, until his surrender on September 3, 1945. As such, he was the commander of all Japanese forces in the Philippines (and thereby the military responsibility for the protection of the country was his). The terms of his appointment also carried a dual responsibility for, as Japan's senior civil authority in the Philippines, he also had the paramount civil responsibility for the protection of its civilian population, a

responsibility he ignored. It is impossible to escape the conclusion that Yamashita knew or had the means to know of the widespread commission of atrocities by members and units of his command and that his failure to inform himself through official means available to him of what was common knowledge throughout his command and throughout the civilian population can only be considered as a criminal dereliction of duty on his part. ^[20]

Weeping crocodile tears for Yamashita's ghost, for any reason, is a disservice not just to one hundred thousand victims who perished in a Manila that was not declared an Open City, but to the untold thousands of victims murdered in an almost countless number of atrocities throughout the Malaya, Singapore, Manchukuo and the Philippines. ^[21]

The decision that the Americans must fight for Manila had been made at the highest levels in Tokyo. Japan was governed largely by a consensus among the oligarchy of ruling factions at the top, and no major decisions of national policy could be reached until such a consensus had been obtained. This process inevitably took time and involved complicated pressures and struggles of will among those of differing opinions. ^[22] It was also a process that, unfortunately has yielded very little documentation, and just how little documentation remained when the Americans arrived in Tokyo was an issue suspected, but not known at the time. The director of Japan's Military History Archives of the National Institute for defense Studies estimated in 2003 that as much as 70% of the Army's wartime records were burned or otherwise destroyed. ^[23]

Though Yamashita had spoken to President Laurel, as President of the Japanese inspired Philippine Republic, of his intention to declare Manila as an Open City ^[24], his actions (withdrawing President José P. Laurel from Manila to Baguio, detaching effective units from his own command and placing

them under command of Rear Admiral Iwabuchi Sanji, provisioning Manila's defenders with munitions and supplies adequate to sustain the defence for a matter of months) remained inconsistent with that statement of intent. ^[25] The declaration of Manila as an Open City was a major matter, beyond even Yamashita's authority, and would certainly have to have been a decision made in Tokyo, not in Manila. Yamashita's misdirection of Laurel is a serious lapse, for it prevented Laurel from doing what Laurel would later claim as a major reason for his innocence on treason charges, namely that his assumption of office was a means of preventing things from being much worse. Certainly for all those remaining in Manila, it is almost impossible to imagine how it possibly could have been worse than it did. In the absence of any documentary evidence in Tokyo concerning the Open City issue, one can only conclude that the Battle of Manila occurred because it was the Imperial desire that it should occur, and that the desire was communicated personally by Terauchi Hisaichi, ^[26] Commander of the Southern Army, to Lieutenant General Yamashita.

What occurred thereafter in Manila was never an instance of a local commander '*going rogue*' but the result of specific intent at the highest levels.

The purpose of the Japanese defense of Manila, the generally accepted view, was threefold: firstly, to effect maximum attrition of American fighting power by utilizing the advantages of natural and man-made defenses within the city; secondly, to delay the occupation and utilization of the Port of Manila as long as possible; and thirdly, so as to assist the homeland defense, to cripple the city as a base for future military operations, and create a humanitarian burden in addition to the normal military requirements. To these three, I have posited a fourth – more of that in a moment.



Nurses, prisoners since 1942, are evacuated from the Santo Tomas Internment Camp (Signal Corps)

Those three purposes were all valid military purposes, but none of them justified the conduct of the forces remaining in Manila. The meme that the forces remaining in Manila had been caught there by an encircling pincer movement, is a convenient modern fiction which, unfortunately, makes the idea that the remaining troops went “*rogue*” more palatable to the modern humanitarian sensibilities. It’s naturally understandable as a pressure cooker comparison, that without a means of escape, the forces remaining within the city would explode under pressure. It’s also a valid principle to be taught in modern military colleges. The problem that History has, though, is that those Japanese forces remaining in Manila were more than

adequately armed and provisioned for a protracted siege of some months, and even when there was a corridor of escape to the east available via the Marikina area, the main forces remaining in Manila, supposedly under pressure, did not attempt to take it. The Battle of Manila is not a valid basis for teaching *that* principle of urban warfare.

There was no bombing of Manila allowed by MacArthur, except in the Port Area, Nielson Field and Nichols Field, a matter of friction between not just the US Army, but also the US Navy which was under a separate command structure. The limitation remained. Tactical artillery use was authorized, but limited to observed military targets. The Japanese artillery was entirely unlimited.

I should like to disabuse anyone who may think that the Japanese forces might have been in any manner under-provisioned or undersupplied. There is a listing of Japanese equipment captured in the Manila Area which indicates how Yamashita had ensured that ample heavy weapons were made available to the planned conflagration. (See Table "A")^[27]

looking to negotiate a satisfactory resolution short of losing the Emperor. Perhaps they

might open negotiations through a country with which it was still officially at peace - Russia. They would require time to pursue these discussions, and it would be necessary to show the Americans that their contemplated losses from a series of urban battles in Japan would be a catastrophically wasteful bloodletting the like of which should be beyond contemplation.

The Battle of Manila became for the

HEAVY WEAPONS CAPTURED FROM THE JAPANESE FORCES WITHIN MANILA (Table "A")

CALIBER and TYPE	NUMBER
7.7-mm., 7.92 -mm., & 13mm. machine guns, various mounts	>600
20-mm. dismounted aircraft machine cannon and antiaircraft weapons	990
25-mm. machine cannon, various mounts	110
37-mm. guns, various mounts	15
40-mm. antiaircraft guns, various mounts	15
47-mm. antitank weapons	5
75-mm. field artillery and antiaircraft guns	10
76-mm. (3-inch) naval guns	15
100-mm. and 105mm guns and howitzers	10
120-mm. dual purpose naval guns	60
127-mm. (5-inch) guns	5
150-mm. (6-inch) weapons	5
150-mm. mortars	5
200-mm. rocket launchers	5

The Japanese had even gone to the extent of setting up artillery noise simulators to draw counter-battery fire towards the grounds of the Philippine General Hospital, well knowing it to be crowded with hapless Manileños seeking refuge. They would, in fact, take steps to prevent the occupants from escaping the premises.

But to their military purposes, I wish to add the consideration of a fourth. Those in the know within the highest levels of the Imperial conclave knew that Japan was losing the Pacific war, and they were, putting it bluntly,

highest Japanese levels of command, the means to administer to the Americans a

serious, salutary caution - an exemplification of Japanese resolve which would confront them directly with their greatest fear -- that the invasion of Japan, city after city after city, suburb after suburb, street after street, house after house, could only be accomplished at the price of the greatest bloodshed that American manhood had ever known. The lesson was to be inflicted with a relatively small group of Iwabuchi's troops, and the massacre of Filipino civilians - who had all been conveniently deemed, by his orders, guerrillas anyhow - an expendable price to pay. It was to be a preview of how the invasion of the Japanese home islands would be fought. It is a frightening theory, that any person could

consider 100,000 innocent Filipino lives a side effect, or policy cost - but that is less than the cost in Japanese lives of a fire raid upon Tokyo, and when one considers the enormity of the atrocities each upon the other, that is the way it played out.

Supposedly, Gen. Yamashita gave an order for Manila to be declared as an open city. At the same time, he detached over four thousand troops under his command, to control by Rear Admiral Iwabuchi Sanji. Why would an open city require another four thousand troops? The important buildings, many schools and colleges were planned for explosive demolition charges. Similarly, the bridges were prepared for demolition. Does any of this look like an open city was being seriously considered by anybody? Nic Roxas, as one of the secretaries to President Laurel, when interviewed for *Manila 1945, The Forgotten Atrocities*, stated that the Japanese had lined up heavy artillery outside of the city in order to demolish it when the Americans arrived.^[28]

It's time to reject Saint Yamashita, his open city, the wayward Rear Admiral and IJN troops going *rogue*. The Japanese set artillery around the city for intended, not incidental purposes and they used them without compunction. To repeat these false memes is to be a dupe to Japanese propaganda, and a disservice to a hundred thousand souls.

PFW



Japanese Type 10 120mm Dual Purpose gun on Dewey Blvd near the Philippine General Hospital. (Signal Corps)

F O O T N O T E S

[1] USS General LeRoy Eltinge (AP-154)

[2] Letter John Lindgren to William T. Calhoun, undated, retrieved at

http://corregidor.org/503_fox/fox_background_01.html;

Author's collection.

[3] A composite of *Vergangenheit* meaning 'past' and *Bewältigung* meaning 'coming to terms with, mastering, wrestling into submission'. Other countries have adopted analogous processes in dealing with criticism of errors of the past, and in reconfiguring their culture and institutions so as to avoid repeating the errors. Notable examples include the South African 'truth and reconciliation' commission, a similar attempt having been declared unconstitutional in the Philippines.

[4] See Hayashi Hirofumi, *BC-Kyu Senpan Saiban* [Class B & C War Crimes Trials] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005), Ch. 6. – footnoted by Hirofumi Hayashi in his paper *Massacre of Chinese in Singapore and its Coverage in Postwar Japan* recovered at: http://battleofmanila.org/Hayashi/Hayashi_Hirofumi_01.htm.

[5] Hirofumi Hayashi, *Massacre of Chinese in Singapore and its Coverage in Postwar Japan*, Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] There is almost a cottage industry in attempting to rehabilitate the reputation of Gen. Yamashita, thereby to diminish the utility of a military tribunal system in dealing with terrorist acts against the United States. The value of the study of the Yamashita trial lies not in its often misstated facts nor in the legal doctrine of strict liability it purportedly espoused (but did not), but in the legal conclusions it actually reached, Yamashita recognized the existence of an affirmative duty on the part of a commander to take such measures as are within his power and appropriate in the circumstances to wage war within the limitations of the laws of war, in particular exercising control over his subordinates; it established that the commander who disregards this duty has committed a violation of the law of war; and it affirmed the summum jus of subjecting an offending commander to trial by a properly constituted tribunal of a state other than his own. (See also *Command Responsibility for War Crimes* by Maj. William H. Parks retrieved at http://battleofmanila.org/Parks/parks_index.htm).



*Malate and Ermita (above and below) bore the brunt of the protracted atrocities.
Both indicate greater damage from burning than from artillery. (MacArthur Memorial Archives)*



[8] Edward Drea, *Documentary Evidence and Studies of Japanese War Crimes: An Interim Assessment* (National Archives and Records Administration for the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government records Interagency Working Group, 2006.)

[9] Daqing Yang, *ibid.*

[10] A social obligation of debt and gratitude felt by each individual to the network of people who surround and help him, a staple ingredient of both political and social life at all levels. To ignore the obligation was to become shameless, *walang hiya*.

[11] With at two noteworthy exceptions – Steinberg, David J., *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967) and De Viana, Augusto V., *Kulaboraboretor! The Issue of Political Collaboration During World War II* (University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, Manila, 2003).

[12] *Ibid.*, 165

[13] I can't blame them for playing to their specialty, so I won't name them, but history is too important to allow legal revisionists to change it.

[14] The hatred of the "MacArthur Kickers" (I call them that as they cannot resist an opportunity for a "free kick") is so complete and self-defining, that they seem to espouse that it would have been better for the world that Mary Pinkney Hardy MacArthur should have exposed her newborn in the wastelands of Arkansas in 1880 rather than raise him. One of my colleagues even has an unhealthy fascination with severing MacArthur's gonads with a rusty knife, and amongst Bataan veterans this is sometimes considered as "mild".

[15] *Embracing Defeat*, by John W. Dower (W. W. Norton & Co., 1999) goes into the steps that MacArthur and his staff took to shield Hirohito from prosecution, thereby to create a meme of the Emperor as a closet-pacifist and puppet of the military. David Bergamini in his book *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy* had argued the same thing in his 1971 book, but his tone was too anecdotal and conspiracy-prone and he was soundly attacked for it. In 2000, Herbert Bix's *"Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan"* attacked the meme with considerably more success. Even though his thrust was essentially the same as that of Bergamini, he was less of a conspiracist and had the benefit of using predominantly Japanese evidence that had been withheld until after Hirohito's death. His conclusion (at p.585, 583) was that MacArthur's efforts to save Hirohito "had a lasting and profoundly distorting impact on Japanese understanding of the lost war."

[16] Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II*, 19.

[17] *Ibid.*, 18.

[18] *Ibid.*, 19.

[19] Legal apologists for Gen. Yamashita tend to attack "MacArthur's Justice," a code phrase implying that if it were not for MacArthur's vindictive ego, his appointment of a legally lightweight tribunal, or for dubious rules of procedure and evidence, a properly constituted tribunal was legally incapable of convicting Yamashita. Sympathy for Yamashita is akin to a magician's misdirection, a distraction of art, for the unpleasant reality is that had Yamashita not been convicted in Manila, he would have faced other courts or tribunals in other jurisdictions at the hands of the English, the Dutch, the Australians and perhaps even the Chinese. Atrocities followed Yamashita as night follows day, and suggestions that he was a cultured gentleman of stoic dignity, and with whom it might be pleasant to take high tea, is a staggering spin. He was a ruthless professional brute, the sort

who sent a thank-you letter to the Kempei Tai for their "fine work" for summarily, and without evidence, trying and executing two thousand Filipinos (including some Americans) after cursory trials, none of which lasted more than five minutes, and none of which even remotely conformed to Japanese legal requirements. Were that not enough, the defenses of several of Yamashita's own subordinate officers in Singapore were predicated upon placing all responsibility upon him, using the plea of superior orders - in essence arguing that the court could sentence only Yamashita, who had personally issued the original orders, and not they who carried them out. The implication that in Manila, he had changed his procedures to *not* know what his subordinates were doing, is fanciful. How artificial pliable legal defenses can be! For further reading, see *Justice Done? Criminal and Moral Responsibility Issues In the Chinese Massacres Trial, Singapore, 1947* by Wai Keng Kwok recovered from <http://battleofmanila.org> as at 1 July 2014. See also *Command Responsibility for War Crimes* by Maj. William H. Parks retrieved at http://battleofmanila.org/Parks/parks_index.htm

[20] Review of the Staff Judge Advocate of the Record of Trial by Military Commission of Tomoyuki Yamashita, Headquarters, United States Army Forces, Western Pacific, December 9, 1945

[21] Document No. 2726 at the War Crimes Trial in Tokyo, Japan, contains 14, 618 pages of sworn affidavits from various eyewitnesses and victims. Each witness described a brutal atrocity committed by the Japanese. Thus numerous other atrocities had already occurred in the provinces, at a time after Yamashita was in control of all the Philippines.

[22] The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, (*Japan's Struggle to End the War.*)

[23] Peter Wetzler, *Hirohito and War: Imperial Tradition and Military Decision Making in Prewar Japan* (Honolulu, HI, University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 19., quoted by Edward Drea, *ibid.*

[24] *Manila Tribune*, January 7, 1945.

[25] The hard decisions were Yamashita's, and the legal fiction that just because, in the view of his defense counsel, the documentary trail pointing in his direction was not established beyond reasonable doubt, that it was not so, has been one of the most persuasive memes that stand between fact and understanding of the nature of the Battle for Manila. By way of contrast, the legal counsel for Yamashita's subordinate officers in Singapore painted him as the specific source of the unlawful orders.

[26] In the Japanese style, I am using the family name first.

[27] Source: XIV Corps Arty Rpt Luzon, p.10; 37th Div. Arty Rpt Luzon, app. 4, Japanese Arty in Sector of 37th Div During Advance to and Capture of Manila; XIV Corps, Japanese Defense of Cities, p. 11; 11th A/B Div Div Rpt Luzon, p. 29; 1st Cav Div G-2 Summary Luzon, p. 40. The calibers listed for some of the artillery pieces are open to question – for example, the 6-inch vs. 150-mm.

[28] Parsons, Peter S. (Director), (2007) *Manila 1945 - The Forgotten Atrocities* (Film Documentary) (Available from Spyron AV Manila.)

POSTSCRIPT:

Upon Reflection

As one who has tried to approach the issue of blame for the catastrophic civilian casualties incurred in the Battle of Manila in a dispassionate way, I do not agree that the American artillery was "indiscriminate," or that theirs was the blame for not allowing the Japanese the opportunity to escape encirclement. The Japanese forces remaining in Manila were never intending to escape an American encirclement.

"Indiscriminate" is an "agenda" word, and has little place in an analysis of this tragedy. The U.S. Artillery had specific targets. They were targeting Japanese. The nearby Japanese artillery at Fort McKinley was particularly damaging, and was used to great effect in keeping the Americans approaching from the South at bay (forgive the pun), and also in defending the Vito Cruz area and the Intramuros and Paco and University of the Philippines (Ermita) battles.

In the tragic case of the destruction of lives and property within the Intramuros, the Americans had paused the battle so as to deliver messages to the Japanese seeking the release of the civilian hostages, and giving them a day to respond by allowing the non-combatant civilians to escape prior to the bombardment being commenced. As it turned out, the Americans needed more than a day to bring in their artillery, but the Japanese remained resolute.

When one looks at the placement of the Japanese artillery, it is no accident that short of the Japanese positions between Dewey Blvd. and Manila Bay, for example, the Japanese had set up artillery simulators within the grounds of the Philippine General Hospital. These machines could emulate the sound, the flash and the actual vibrations of real artillery, and their use was to attract American counter-battery fire, which might otherwise have been directed effectively

against true targets. [These devices had been used in 1942, successfully, near Cavite during the siege of Corregidor to misdirect return fire from Ft. Drum and Ft. Mills.]

One also needs to consider that there had been a well-planned Japanese strategy to set up resistance among civilians to cause even more death and destruction. The role of the Makapili is under-played in the history books not just because its opportunism had developed out of a long history of Filipino anti-colonialism and anti-Americanism (which still attracts many authors), but because influential senior Makapili survived post-war to become politically powerful, wealthy and, above all, well-connected. To some of the elite, collaborating with the Japanese (but with their fingers crossed behind their backs) was a "patriotic act" rather than moral bankruptcy, and thus deserving of acclaim and credit, rather than imprisonment on treason charges. Others, though, collaborated unreservedly, and took up weapons to assist the Japanese, assisting the Kempeitai by identifying those patriotic to the Philippines and the return of the Americans.

I, on the other hand, would give the Makapili credit, if that is the word, for about 5,000 or more deaths of their own countrymen. I wondered for a time how freebooters and plunderers of this ilk not only escaped observation and comment by people who specialize in this battle, but could prosper post-war. Few Filipino authors have closely examined the truth about the Makapili and thus written history has been light as to their sins, influence and connivance. Some writers appear to have dodged the issue, as if to go beyond a passing mention might well have an effect upon their credentials. Thus I am in debit to Teodoro A. Agoncillo for *The Fateful Years Japan's Adventure in the Philippines 1941-45* (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co. 1965) and to Augusto V. De Viana for *Kulaboretur! The Issue of Political Collaboration During World War II* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House,

2003) for their closer examination. of the issues.

I am afraid though that my own theory might be somewhat controversial. Forgiving and forgetting may be considered desirable social and religious virtues here, but the examination of History requires remembrance and judgment. Too much of a virtue can become a vice, and the *Amnesty* of 1948 has transmitted the wrong image down through the generations - that ignorance of history can be bliss, and justified too. The Amnesty established the futility of opposing the overlords of the sword, and of sacrificing one's blood and treasure for the ultimate benefit of one's motherland. *Amnesty* gave a forgiveness to collaborators who had conceded no sin, had expressed no contrition and who had performed no penance. The lesson of *Amnesty* was that self-sacrifice to oppose an invader was for simple people, and that survival, self-enrichment, and collaboration were justifiable. The ends not only justified the means for the collaborationists, amnesty glorified them.

The greatest racket of all, though, has been to justify their own situational pliability in the guise of secular altruism - by claiming that if it wasn't for their collaboration, things would have been even worse! This, while they loafed in comfort, lived in their own homes, drove their own cars, enjoyed their assured incomes, and built up their family fortunes to pass along to their progeny. It was to the good fortune of the collaborators that MacArthur returned when he did, for had the Japanese seized the rice crop as had been planned, the number of ordinary Filipinos dying of starvation would have been in the thousands daily, not just in their hundreds. This is not my assessment, but that of Secretary Thomas Confesor in 1945, a former guerrilla and unrepentant anti-collaborationist if ever there was one.

I bridle also at the use of the word "bombing" in reference to the *Battle of Manila*, for that suggests waves of American

bombers sent in by MacArthur to rain death upon a hapless civilian population below. There is rarely any mention that MacArthur has been criticised for prohibiting bombing, but then again MacArthur is criticised for everything, including waking up in the morning.

In the past, and somewhat still the case, there has been a meme that the "shelling" referred to what the Americans did. Only lately has it come to include what the Japanese did as well. It is as if the Japanese damage had occurred inadvertently, but that the Americans must be excoriated for their intent. This is preposterous, for what else can one call the intentional exploding of nearly every major building in the city, and nearly the entirety of the utilities and infrastructure?

What does one call the starving of civilians? The distinguished group Memorare has made a study of the battle casualty numbers (about 100,000). It's difficult to estimate city-wide numbers at the best of times, and that is a huge volume of bodies to deal with. It has been alleged that the number of burials was inflated, as the U.S. Army paid funeral parlors on a per-burial basis, and that the parlors may have inflated the numbers. What I find most telling though, in terms of the sheer unforgettable magnitude of human tragedy, is that there were deaths from starvation, and that the number dying from starvation, malnutrition, and health-related factors brought about by the Japanese maladministration of the economy did not cease when the battle ceased. The food situation in Manila had deteriorated to such an extent that thousands - not tens, not hundreds, but thousands died, probably about 15,000 - mostly women and children. - from non-battle related causes.

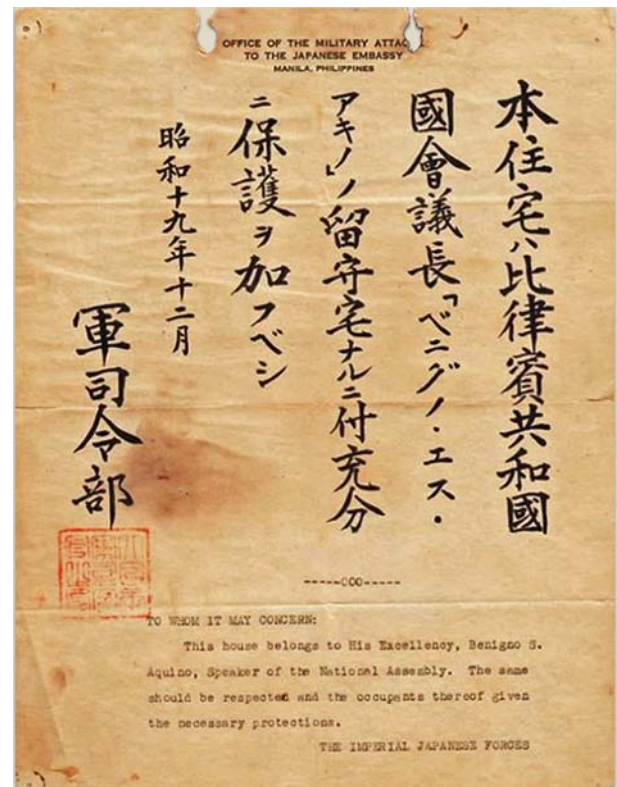
I do not wish to allocate cause of death between the various shellings and explosions and the rest of the killing methods. I consider tabulations of that sort to be politically motivated pettifoggery. The simple fact of it all was that the Americans were not intending

to kill the civilians. The Japanese were intending to maximize the death toll, and to create such a communal burden upon the survivors that it would be months before Manila could get on its feet again. The Japanese had a dual purpose to their shelling: military personnel and civilians. They were set up in strategic locations. Who do you think would more effectively kill civilians?

I would guess that the total figure is possibly closer to 120,000. In one sense ALL of them were caused by the Japanese; but in terms of whose bullets and shells caused what damage, I would guess this split: Japanese and Makapilis: 105,000; Americans about 15,000. Whatever it was, it was first and foremost, unnecessary. It's no wonder that post-war, the unvarnished truth about WWII was never contained in Japan's textbooks, otherwise the new generation might well have decided that their parents' generation did not merit the ancestral respect that Japan's passing generations had attained throughout the course of the nation's history.

It has been attributed (though disputedly) to Zhou Enlai, the Premier of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1976, that in responding to a question about what his thoughts were on the popular revolt in France (1789) he replied, "Too early to say." Whether or not the truth of this anecdote was lost in translation, it does contain a kernel of wisdom that we would be well to consider - that we can be too impatient to rush to judgment, and we need to cultivate an ability to think long term. Prior to doing so, the lumps that were swept under the carpet by the Amnesty need to be uncovered and dealt with. Surely, if the purpose of History is not to benchmark and judge progress, how can an unexamined society be considered to have progressed at all?

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They loafed in comfort, lived in their own homes, drove their own cars, enjoyed their assured incomes, and built up their family fortunes to pass along to their progeny. They must have been physically blind not to have noticed what was going on around them - that or just liars.



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Fire Damage and demolition damage north of the Pasig. (Photos by Fred Hill)

