

'First Essentials of Survival': Ensuring the Support and Compliance of Civilians in the Guerrilla Conflict with Japan on Panay, 1942–1945

War in History
2023, Vol. 30(3) 300–319
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DOI: 10.1177/09683445221136183
journals.sagepub.com/home/wih



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Abstract

This article offers a detailed examination of the strategies employed by the resistance leadership in Panay to mobilize and, if necessary, coerce civilians into supporting them in their guerrilla conflict with Japan. It argues that their ability to adapt and, thereby, continually ensure the support and compliance of the civilian population were as important, if not more so, to their overall success than strictly military accomplishments. The primary aim of this article is to bring the importance of civilians into focus and deepen our historical understanding of a much-understudied and understated aspect of resistance to Japanese occupation in the Philippines.

Keywords

Pacific War, guerrilla warfare, resistance, the Philippines, Panay, civilians

Panay, an island in the Visayas region of the Philippines, was successfully invaded by the Kawamura Detachment of the Imperial Japanese Army, which landed and, meeting no resistance, advanced swiftly in the island's three provinces on 16 April 1942. The Sixty-First Division of the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE), tasked with defending Panay, had been under-manned and ill-equipped. Recognizing that they were in no position to mount effective opposition following conventional tactics, Colonel Albert Christie prepared for a protracted guerrilla-style campaign in the mountainous interior of the island by transferring weapons and supplies inland, by establishing base areas, and by setting up communication installations. Just over a month after the initial landings, however, Christie was forced to abandon these plans after very little fighting and, in accordance with orders, officially announced the surrender

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of the USAFFE in Panay on 24 May 1942.¹ This was not an end to resistance in the island, however. A handful of Filipino officers refused to abide by Christie's surrender orders and escaped to the mountains to follow through with the guerrilla-style campaign. Lieutenant Colonel Macario Peralta Jr. took command of these men in June 1942. He immediately set about recalling and reorganizing all non-surrendered USAFFE men, inducting and training new recruits, developing an intelligence network to monitor Japanese activities and stockpiling food, weapons, ammunition, and fuel.² Around the same time, the former governor of Iloilo, Tomas Confesor, having escaped Manila after declining Japanese requests for cooperation, established a civil administration composed of those local elites who had similarly refused to join the three provincial puppet governments led by Fermin Caram (Iloilo), Tomas Fornier (Antique), and Gabriel Hernandez (Capiz). Under Confesor's guidance, this administration carried out day-to-day government functions in areas that remained free of Japanese control.³

In July 1942, these two leaders agreed to cooperate and, although this alliance would end in 1944 due to cumulative disagreements and ongoing rivalry, together they organized a formidable resistance movement that became a major source of frustration for Japanese forces.⁴ Indeed, Captain Kumai Toshimi, who had been stationed on the island since October 1942, detailed the protracted and brutal fighting in his memoirs, describing it as the worst guerrilla warfare of the Pacific War.⁵ Singled out and lauded in General Douglas MacArthur's post-war reports for its early organization, stable leadership and instrumental role in the eventual liberation of the island, the guerrilla resistance movement on Panay had ensured that by the time the USAFFE returned on 18 March 1945, much of it had already been liberated and Japanese units had either fled or were besieged in a handful of garrisons.⁶ The USAFFE, meeting no resistance upon their

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- 1 For further information about the USAFFE's war preparations, see Gamaliel Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare on Panay Island in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Sixth Military District Veterans Foundation, Inc., 1977), pp. 1–39.
 - 2 Detailed in Central Philippine University World War II Documents compiled by Jose Balagot (hereafter CPU Docs.), Vol. 1: On the Organization and Re-Organization of the Sixth Military District.
 - 3 The history of the Civil Resistance Government is detailed in CPU Docs., Vol. 40: Confesor Papers.
 - 4 Circular to all Deputy Governors (17 July 1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 33: Confesor Papers; CPU Docs., Vol. 50: Study of Peralta/Confesor Controversy offers an account from the military perspective of the relationship between Confesor and Peralta; for the civilian perspective, see Cesario Golez, *Calvary of Resistance: The Price of Liberty* (Iloilo City: Diolosa Publishing House, 1973); see also Alfred McCoy, "'Politics by Other Means': World War II in the Western Visayas, Philippines", in Alfred McCoy (ed.), *Southeast Asia under Japanese Occupation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1980), pp. 205–24.
 - 5 Kumai Toshimi, *Firipin no Chi to Doro: Taiheiyō sensō Saiaku no Gerira Sen* [The Blood and Mud of the Philippines: The Worst Guerrilla Warfare of the Pacific War] (Tokyo: Jijitsūshinsha, 1977).
 - 6 *Reports of General MacArthur, Volume 1: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1966), pp. 315–6; Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 142–7.

landing, were, therefore, able to recapture Iloilo City in just two days.⁷ A US intelligence report prepared in November 1944 found the achievement of this guerrilla army ‘remarkable’ and credited the leadership for its effectiveness in recruitment and training, for successfully conserving the strength of their forces, for the early establishment of communications with MacArthur and for the development of a vast intelligence network.⁸ Overlooked in these, and other military accounts, however, were the efforts employed to mobilize and, at times, coerce civilian support and compliance.

The resistance leadership realized from the outset that enacting measures to win over, or at the very least establish firm control over, the people of Panay would be the ‘first essentials for survival’.⁹ In a guerrilla conflict, civilians could provide material support in the form of food, clothing, and money; could pass on vital intelligence that enabled guerrillas to stage hit-and-run attacks and to evacuate prior to an enemy ‘penetration’; could offer shelter and camouflage which would allow guerrillas to evade capture; and could refuse to cooperate with demands from Japanese units to identify members of the guerrilla army or the location of their bases. They would be, in the words of members of the movement, the ‘backbone’ to the resistance, the so-called ‘wife’ to the guerrilla ‘husband’, and, whoever secured civilian support would, according to Lieutenant Pedro Serran, Peralta’s intelligence officer, ‘ultimately WIN [the] war’.¹⁰ The resistance leadership also understood that any support would be neither unwavering nor unconditional; civilians were not, as District Adjutant Jose Doromal noted, ‘super-patriots’.¹¹ Under wartime conditions, the people of Panay would suffer hardships exacerbated by the demands made of them by both the guerrillas and the Japanese. ‘Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea’, as Gamaliel Manikan put it in his official history, civilians bore the brunt of brutal reprisals from both sides and, as such, their attitudes and sympathies were mutable, continually shifting according to changing personal circumstances, emerging opportunities, the stark realities of wartime deprivations, and most importantly, in response to the policies and practices of both the guerrilla organization and the Japanese occupation forces.¹² In addition to military activities, therefore, Peralta and his subordinate commanders, assisted by civil governors under the leadership of Confesor, continually monitored civilians and implemented various strategies designed to ensure that they offered moral and material assistance to the organization while also complying with the obligations and limits placed upon them.

Using the copious material produced by the guerrilla resistance movement, in this article, I explore the ways in which the resistance leadership sought to mobilize, and

7 For an overview, see Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 711–8.

8 U.S. Army Military Intelligence Section, *The Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines 1941–1945, Volume 1: Intelligence Series* (Tokyo: Unknown publisher, 1948), pp. 46–51.

9 Cited in Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 55–6.

10 Pedro Serran to Benjamin Baylon (11 June 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 161: Panay-Romblon Underground Civil Resistance, 1944 Files; see also Simplicio Pendon to Cesario Golez, March 1943, CPU Docs., Vol. 85: Pendon Papers, 1944 Files.

11 Jose Doromal, *War in Panay: A Documentary History of the Resistance Movement in Panay during World War II* (Manila: Diamond Historical Publishing, 1952), p. 98.

12 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 48.

when necessary coerce, the people of Panay to support their growing army. Through this analysis, I will highlight that the ability of the resistance leadership to adapt and, thereby, continually ensure the support and compliance of the civilian population was as important, if not more so, to their overall success than the purely military activities documented in US military reports. Since the willingness of civilians to even tolerate the guerrillas was shaped by the necessities and pressures placed upon them by the ongoing and, at times vicious, conflict in the island, I will also contextualize the myriad of different strategies employed by considering the impact of Japanese counter-measures and the wider wartime context. In doing so, I emphasize that while the guerrilla leadership generally favoured a conciliatory approach to the civilians of Panay as their principal means of support, when relations were perceived to be tenuous, often as a result of Japanese policies, they were willing to consider violence. As such, while the primary aim of this article is to provide a more holistic analysis of the guerrilla leadership's mobilization and coercion of civilian support, which will deepen our historical understanding of a much-understudied and understated aspect of resistance to Japanese occupation in the Philippines, it will also yield insights into factors which shaped belligerents' decisions to target civilians in guerrilla conflicts.¹³ In analysing the evolution of the resistance leadership's policies towards civilians, this article will, therefore, also complement existing scholarship which seeks to understand the targeting and victimization of civilians in conflicts involving guerrilla-style warfare.¹⁴

'Race for the People's Mind'

From the outset, the resistance leadership enacted measures to win over and control the civilian population. Peralta firmly believed that victory was 'first and foremost, a race for the people's mind, their sympathies, and, if possible, their loyalty' and was determined to win this ostensible race.¹⁵ In this, the guerrillas had some early advantages. While Peralta and his senior officers were not natives of Panay, his army was increasingly formed of men – family members, friends, and neighbours – from local communities. Confesor and his deputy governors were also known to the populace and familiar with the

13 While the importance of civilians has been acknowledged in a recent study, the measures taken by guerrillas to ensure their support have not been given extensive treatment. See James Kelly Morningstar, *War and Resistance in the Philippines, 1942–1944* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2021).

14 For example, Alexander Downes, 'Desperate Times, Desperate Measures: The Causes of Civilian Victimization in War', *International Security*, 30 (2006), pp. 152–95; Benjamin Valentino, Paul Huth, and Dylan Balch-Lindsay, "'Draining the Sea": Mass Killing and Guerrilla Warfare', *International Organization*, 58 (2004), pp. 375–407; Reed Wood, 'Rebel Capability and Strategic Violence against Civilians', *Journal of Peace Research*, 47 (2010), pp. 601–14; Benjamin Valentino, 'Why We Kill: The Political Science of Political Violence against Civilians', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17 (2014), pp. 89–103, offers a useful summary of this research. See also literature on civilian targeting in civil wars, which often involve irregular warfare, as summarized in Laia Balcells and Jessica Stanton, 'Violence against Civilians during Armed Conflict: Moving beyond the Macro- and Micro-Level Divide', *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24 (2021), pp. 45–69.

15 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 55–6.

dynamics of the island. While no guarantee of steadfast loyalty, this did make the people naturally more amenable to the guerrilla organization and more tolerant of the burdens placed on them in sustaining it. A second major advantage was the exodus of civilians out of coastal and lowland regions after the outbreak of war in December 1941. USAFFE troops, while preparing for the invasion, had encouraged this evacuation as they were also carrying out a scorched-earth policy in major towns to deprive incoming Japanese forces of important war materials. Efforts to persuade civilians to flee were aided by widespread rumours, perpetuated by Confesor, which encouraged civilians to stay away from Japanese soldiers by warning of atrocities.¹⁶ Thus, even before the invasion of Panay, a significant portion of the population was living under direct guerrilla control where their movements could be monitored, their encounters with Japanese forces minimized and, more importantly, their exposure to Japanese propaganda limited.

In these areas, life went on as normally as possible under wartime conditions, and civilians were initially free to conduct their daily affairs with only moderate inconvenience.¹⁷ Other areas were not so harmonious. There was an upsurge in lawlessness in the turmoil of the invasion, and civilians soon came to live in fear of bandits who took advantage of the initial absence of a police force to wantonly loot and rob the people living in areas outside of Japanese control. Of this period, Doromal observed that 'danger lurked everywhere and no individual felt safe even in his own home'.¹⁸ This quickly became a serious issue. The bandits were, as Manikan wrote, 'doing the Japanese a great service' for, as a result, civilians, especially those from the richer communities, began to return to their homes in Japanese-occupied towns where security was assured and order was maintained at the point of a bayonet and returning evacuees could be pressed into cooperation.¹⁹ The resistance leadership recognized the gravity of the situation and reacted swiftly. Confesor created an armed unit, the provincial guards, to police the unoccupied areas and on 22 May 1942 issued 'General Orders No. 1' which warned that anyone caught burning, looting, or robbing private homes would be arrested and, if they should resist, shot.²⁰ Peralta similarly distributed a memorandum to his subordinates stating that 'drastic and extreme measures' could be used to stamp out lawlessness.²¹ He also directed a number of units to work with the provincial guards to police unruly areas and track down known bandits.²² At the same time, Confesor sought to address the issue of returning evacuees and the broader problem of cooperation with the enemy by instituting a harsh policy against collaborators. 'Manifesto No. 1' issued on 8 May 1942 warned that anyone found cooperating with or working for the Japanese military in any capacity 'would be dealt with severely, even to the extent of placing his life and properties in serious jeopardy'.²³ To deter civilians from returning to Japanese areas, provincial

16 Golez, *Calvary of Resistance*, p. 10.

17 Eliseo Rio, *Rays of a Setting Sun: Recollections of WWII* (Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1999), p. 157.

18 Doromal, *War in Panay*, p. 11.

19 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 53.

20 General Orders No. 1, (22 May 1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 33.

21 Memorandum to all Commanding Officers (20 June 1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 1.

22 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 76–7.

23 Manifesto No. 1, (8 May 1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 33.

guards were given license to make summary arrests and, sometimes, to liquidate such 'traitors' on-the-spot.²⁴ These actions were largely successful and, by the end of July 1942, the resistance leadership considered the crisis to have been averted. Peace and order had largely been restored and strict policy towards collaborators appeared to be deterring further evacuees from returning.

The attention of the leadership turned to the low morale in Panay following the disheartening surrender in May 1942. Civilians appeared somewhat antagonistic towards the non-surrendered and regrouped USAFFE men due to their initial inactivity as Peralta abided by a promise to Christie that they would take no bold actions for two months lest Japanese soldiers retaliate against those that surrendered.²⁵ It was important that efforts be taken, therefore, to boost the confidence and spirit of the populace. This primarily involved an intensive propaganda campaign which, in addition to circulating rumours of Japanese brutality, emphasized that the 'Japanese way' would destroy the democratic, liberal principles upon which the Philippine Commonwealth had been founded in 1935. The people of Panay were told that they had a duty to fight for their way of life and that they must endure the sufferings of war which would be compensated upon the return, and subsequent victory, of their American allies whose aid was 'just around the corner'. This campaign was carried on primarily through oral means via house-to-house visits and public meetings, and all guerrillas were to be 'propagandists' by passing on positive war news, conducting themselves well, and treating the people with respect.²⁶ Some leaflets and information bulletins were also printed to be disseminated to loyal civilians and, in December 1942, the first resistance newspaper, *Ang Tigbatas*, was launched. Published biweekly in English and Hiligaynon, the *Ang Tigbatas* reported favourable developments in the war, printed copies of messages and speeches from President Manuel Quezon and MacArthur, showcased inspirational and patriotic writings and featured an array of anti-Japanese stories until its last issue in 1945.²⁷ This propaganda campaign was carried out to moderate success; however, its impact was significantly greater after the resistance leadership launched their first attacks against Japanese forces in Panay.

In August 1942, following a short period of inactivity to avoid retaliation against those who surrendered earlier in the year, guerrilla units across the island staged hit-and-run attacks, arranged ambushes, sabotaged roads, railways, and bridges and on occasion raided under-manned garrisons to great effect. The Japanese garrison unit on the island, a much smaller unit than the initial landing force, was completely unprepared. Having caught the Japanese by surprise and having the advantage in manpower, Peralta's army was able to force a withdrawal of troops in a number of localities. By the end of October, the Japanese held only four garrisons.²⁸ These early victories

24 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 48.

25 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 66.

26 Patricio Confesor, Tomas Confesor's brother, summarized the main points of guerrilla propaganda in his narrative account, see CPU Docs., Vol. 41: Confesor Papers.

27 Copies of *Ang Tigbatas* can be viewed in CPU Docs., Vol. 59: WWII – Historical and Cultural Matters.

28 Details of guerrilla activities to 1 October 1942 can be found in CPU Docs., Vol. 1; Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 25–38 gives a Japanese perspective of the situation.

bolstered propaganda efforts for the resistance movement. Japanese forces no longer appeared invincible, and people began to believe more surely the claims that the United States would eventually prevail. These successes were fleeting, however. Towards the end of 1942, Japanese forces embarked on a determined campaign to restore peace and order and to pacify the civilian population.

Japanese Counter-Measures

In November 1942, Japanese forces responded to the upsurge in guerrilla activity, not just in Panay but throughout the Visayas region, by sending reinforcements to carry out 'intensive and general operations ... to the end that these unruly elements may be completely wiped out'.²⁹ Bolstered by additional manpower and air support, Japanese units in Panay launched their first punitive campaign later that month. With stores of arms and ammunition running low and anticipated American aid yet to arrive, Peralta ordered his troops not to defend the towns and *barrios* they had retaken from Japanese forces, but instead to retreat.³⁰ As such, by the end of December 1942, guerrilla activity was scaled back to the sporadic sniping of small patrols that ventured into their territory and Japanese units had re-established control over most of their original garrisons, while also considerably extending their influence over Panay and its people.³¹

These punitive operations were supported by propaganda and pacification activities carried out by Lieutenant Hitomi Junsuke's unit, which had been sent to Panay after earlier successes in Luzon. Hitomi recognized that the vast majority of people were more concerned with their day-to-day living conditions and, therefore, would be more easily swayed to the Japanese side if they were assured of security and a reasonable standard of living. Thus, he appealed to the people of Panay not to take up arms or to support the guerrillas out of a blind loyalty to the United States, but to 'wait and see' what Japanese occupation might bring to the Philippines. His unit also employed relief measures, such as selling daily commodities, like soap and matches brought from Manila, at cheap prices, offering medical services, and providing employment opportunities with promises of food and good wages to complement this propaganda.³² With the burdens of wartime beginning to be more keenly felt by the end of 1942, this proved to be a modestly effective tactic. There were shortages of food, money, clothes, and other essential products, prices were rising sharply, profiteering was out of control,

29 'Army will annihilate guerrillas in Visayas', *Manila Tribune* (21 November 1942).

30 Macario Peralta to Leopoldo Relunia (24 November 1942 and 28 November 1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 9: Communications from Peralta to Relunia, 1942.

31 Relunia to Tomas Confesor (2 March 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 98: Panay-Romblon Resistance, 1944 Files, gives estimated numbers of Japanese garrisons in the island after the 1942 punitive operations.

32 See interview with Hitomi in *Nihon no Firipin Senryōki ni kansuru Shiryō Chōsa Fōramu* [Forum for the Survey of Sources Concerning the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines] *Intabyū Kiroku: Nihon no Firipin Senryō* [Interview Records: The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines] (Tokyo: Ryūkei Shosha, 1994), pp. 514–21; for a detailed analysis of Hitomi's pacification strategy, see Nakano Satoshi, 'Appeasement and Coercion' in Ikehata Setsuho and Ricardo Trota Jose (eds.), *The Philippines under Japan: Occupation Policy and Reaction* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1999), pp. 21–58.

and living conditions were deteriorating rapidly.³³ The situation in guerrilla-controlled areas was further exacerbated by the scorched-earth tactics employed by Peralta's men as they retreated which intensified the demands of supporting a guerrilla army. Excessive commandeering by those who gave little consideration for the privations experienced by the people and, at times, abused their power to force civilians into giving more than they could afford, exacerbated tensions and resentment.³⁴ Consequently, with relations strained and civilians demoralized in the face of the progressive concession of territory by guerrilla units, during the first months of 1943, there was a steady flow of civilians who, attracted by promises of work, access to essential commodities, and rumours of significantly better living conditions, began to return to their homes in Japanese-controlled areas.³⁵ While the flow of civilians into Japanese areas remained a trickle rather than a flood, the resistance leadership were somewhat alarmed by this trend. Not only would these civilians be exposed to Japanese pacification and propaganda efforts, but they could also be more closely surveilled. More importantly, they were a potential source of information for *kenpei* (military police) officers who could use various techniques to induce cooperation and used the increased transience of people to facilitate the use of spies and fifth columnists to infiltrate guerrilla areas.³⁶ Combined with deteriorating living conditions and increasing demands placed upon the people as a result of wartime conditions, the counter-measures adopted by Japanese forces presented new, serious challenges for the resistance leadership, which intensified the growing competition between Peralta and Confesor and had begun to jeopardize their hold over the civilian population. Thus, in 1943, the resistance leadership concentrated their efforts more on the 'home front' which, Peralta explained in a letter to Leopoldo Relunia, his second-in-command, had become 'the biggest problem' facing the organization at that time.³⁷

To re-assert their control over the populace of Panay, the resistance leadership employed more restrictive policies which they enforced through threat, intimidation and, on occasion, violence. Their main concern lay in countering Japanese espionage activities and collaboration as the most dangerous threat. Indeed, in a message to his staff officers, Peralta had warned that in 1943, the situation had changed in Panay; 'whereby our main enemy really is not the Japs. It is the pro-Japs, spies, fifth-columnists, traitors and puppets'.³⁸ In addressing this issue, he adopted similar measures to those enacted by Confesor the previous year. The populace was, first and foremost, warned

33 Relunia to Confesor (2 March 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 98.

34 Memorandum to all Deputy Governors (27 May 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 42.

35 Epifanio Montoro to Relunia (19 February 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 98 explains the situation at this time. Kumai also documented this in his memoirs, see Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 23–4, 54.

36 Discussion of problem can be viewed in Memorandum, Confesor to all (1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 33; ATIS, Current Translations No. 147: Translation No. 24 – Extracts from Iloilo Military Police File gives an idea of the important information obtained through such measures.

37 Peralta to Relunia (1 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 3: Communications from Peralta to Relunia, 1942–1945.

38 Message to Division Staff Officers (17 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 101: OCA Files.

that such people would be 'dealt with severely' or by 'drastic measures'. At first, this usually meant arrest, followed by trial and detention in make-shift prisons. However, wording was typically left ominous and vague and, as the year progressed, suspected spies and known collaborators were 'liquidated' by army men and provincial guards as a matter of course.³⁹ To combat the rising issue of civilian transience which facilitated the infiltration of pro-Japanese elements into guerrilla areas, movement was highly regulated. From April 1943, civilians were required to carry identification slips for travel for which they must have special approval from civil officials. All residents over the age of ten were to be registered in their local communities, suspicious characters or unfamiliar faces were to be reported for further investigation, and merchants from Japanese-controlled areas were to be closely watched.⁴⁰ On 13 April 1943, Confesor issued a memorandum prohibiting travel to Japanese-controlled areas altogether. He cautioned that anyone caught doing so would be arrested and their property would be confiscated. All who were discovered in possession of Japanese money or commodities handed out in Japanese areas would fall under immediate suspicion and similarly be 'dealt with as traitors'.⁴¹ If warnings went unheeded, Peralta's army was willing to resort to a 'more radical policy'. Major Tomas de Castro, for instance, advised Confesor on 2 July 1943 that with Japanese espionage and fifth column activities 'rampant' in Capiz and civilians continuing to approach Japanese-controlled areas, the army would take 'drastic steps' by shooting on sight anyone caught doing so.⁴²

So-called 'loose talk' was also a problem that the resistance leadership was eager to resolve in 1943 for those employed by the *kenpeitai* appeared to be obtaining more of their information from careless and indiscreet conversations than from willing traitors. All civilians were to be instructed on the absolute necessity of remaining silent about the identities and movements of members of the resistance organization, even when discussing such with well-known members of local communities. Intelligence agents were ordered to perform regular checks in well-trafficked public areas to ensure that 'secrecy discipline' was being maintained, and they were sanctioned to impose penalties for anyone who casually divulged information about the organization. In May 1943, it became possible for people to be convicted, tried, and imprisoned for 'loose talk' under espionage laws enacted by Confesor.⁴³ As might be expected, some of the measures imposed by the leadership at this time began to impinge heavily on the daily life of the people of Panay. The economic vitality of some localities was stifled by, for example, prohibiting the sale of coconut-based liquor, tuba, in addition to a ban on gambling which included the highly

39 Memorandum, Confesor to all Civilians (1942), CPU Docs., Vol. 33; Memorandum, Confesor to all civilians (11 October 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 93: Office of Civilian Affairs (OCA) Files; Memorandum, Relunia to all commanding officers, CPU Docs., Vol. 101: OCA Files.

40 Memorandum (2 April 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 152: Panay-Romblon Underground Civil Resistance, 1943 Files.

41 Memorandum (13 April 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 153: Panay-Romblon Underground Civil Resistance, 1943 Files.

42 Tomas de Castro to Confesor (2 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 95: OCA Files.

43 Memorandum No. 12 (1 May 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 42: Confesor Papers; Mariano Benedicto to all Deputy Governors (12 January 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 152.

popular and lucrative past-time; cock-fighting.⁴⁴ Executive Order No. 8, which made it illegal to export rice, corn, and sugar between sectors in an effort to control prices and prevent profiteering, also had some serious ramifications for those parts of the island which were not self-sustaining. In Aklan, for instance, there were reports of impending famine since rice could not be imported from the neighbouring Ilayan sector of Capiz.⁴⁵

The resistance leadership was aware that measures which impacted civilian lives and livelihoods in such a manner and hinged upon the threat and occasional exercise of violence could only be employed for a short period of time lest they drive civilians into the arms of the enemy.⁴⁶ Thus, alongside restrictive, coercive methods, Confesor and Peralta enacted a series of policies designed to bring relief and further develop the positive relationship between the civilians and the guerrillas. To reduce tensions caused by uncontrolled commandeering, civil officials were to take responsibility for supplying and feeding the army. Enlisted men were forbidden from going directly to civilians for food and, though select officers still could requisition from the people, they were to give receipts, if not some partial payment, for the supplies they received. Food production was incentivized, farmers were granted loans, and bonuses were to be given for those who were engaged in the cultivation of essential root crops in order to deal with potential shortages. The 'home industries', including weaving and textile manufacture, were to be reinvigorated and people were encouraged to re-appropriate everyday items, like rice sacks, which could be transformed into clothes and shoes.⁴⁷ In support of these measures, the propaganda campaign was intensified and, by this time, emphasized further the earlier promises of recompense after the war. As part of this, the Office of Civilian Affairs (OCA), a unit tasked with monitoring the living conditions and morale of the civilian population, began visibly compiling statistical information regarding civilian losses in advance.⁴⁸ In early 1943, then, the resistance leaders relied more on a careful balance of conciliatory and coercive policies to maintain their hold over the people of Panay. In adopting this approach, they appear to have been largely successful since, in spite of the improved pacification techniques employed by Japanese occupation forces at this stage of the occupation, the majority of civilians did continue to live in guerrilla-controlled areas and to provide active assistance. During the latter half of 1943, however, the relationship between the civilians and the guerrillas became strained to the point of breaking as they struggled to survive a renewed onslaught from Japanese forces after they launched second, and considerably more brutal, punitive campaign in the island.

44 Military Police Circular No. 1 (2 April 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 101; for impact, see Maximo Caingcoy to Confesor (28 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 101.

45 Letter, Governor Cornelio Villareal to de Castro (9 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 99: OCA Files.

46 Peralta quoted in Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, p. 55.

47 Confesor to all Deputy Governors (26 March 1943) and Instructions on Executing the Relief Programme (3 April 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 42.

48 Details of the duties of the OCA can be located in CPU Docs., Vol. 51: District History Section Files.

Weathering the Storm

In mid-1943, when Japanese forces started their operations, the situation in Panay had been relatively quiet for several months. Towards the end of 1942, Peralta had successfully made contact with MacArthur and had received orders to stop launching attacks against Japanese forces, concentrating instead on the maintenance and growth of his intelligence network.⁴⁹ While there were some small-scale clashes with Japanese troops in early 1943, by April the guerrillas were rigidly adhering to the new 'lie-low' policy.⁵⁰ Despite efforts to persuade the Japanese that they had disbanded during the 1942 punitive campaign, however, Japanese officers in Manila had come to view Peralta's organization as particularly strong and a symbol of resistance in the unruly Visayas region. In fact, in March 1943, the guerrillas had sniped at and almost killed Lieutenant General Tanaka Shizuichi, commander of Japanese forces in the Philippines, during his visit to the island, inciting his ire and seeming to confirm the reports of those like Hitomi who had warned that the Panay guerrillas were a powerful force.⁵¹ The island, therefore, became a focal point of a general drive to suppress guerrilla activity in the Philippines in the lead-up to the nominal granting of independence in October 1943.

In July 1943, Japanese units began an intense, highly destructive campaign that saw civilians become the deliberate targets of large-scale and indiscriminate violence. Over a period of six months, these forces left a trail of death and devastation in their wake as they moved from region-to-region searching for guerrilla bases, key resistance leaders, wireless radio equipment, and weapons. Frustrated by the cumulative failures of pacification efforts, hardened by the bitter experience of guerrilla-style combat, and under pressure from superiors who turned a blind eye to the methods used, Captain Watanabe Kengo, the operations and intelligence officer for the battalion, successfully pushed his agenda for a more extreme strategy specifically directed at the civilian population as the main source of support for Peralta's army.⁵² Indiscriminate, yet strategic and systematic, violence, was unleashed on the populace in an effort to sever their support for the guerrillas.⁵³ Confronted by unrelenting violence, the resistance movement was soon in a precarious position. The 'lie-low' policy, while protecting the organization, left the people exposed to Japanese atrocities. Moreover, as de Castro observed, Japanese patrols were free to roam unmolested by guerrilla units causing civilians, who were the exclusive victims of atrocities, to start losing faith in them and, if action were not taken, the resistance movement might lose their support altogether.⁵⁴ However, engaging Japanese troops would have contravened MacArthur's orders and there was no guarantee that a sudden upsurge in guerrilla activity would not aggravate the situation, inviting further retaliation and violence. Thus,

49 Radio Message from MacArthur (18 December 1942) in CPU Docs., Vol. 1.

50 CPU Docs., Vol. 14: Unit Journal, 61st Division (1942–1943) gives an idea of guerrilla activities in Iloilo at this time; Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 54–8.

51 Hitomi interview in *Nihon no Firipin Senryōki, Intabyū Kiroku*, p. 516; this incident is also recorded in Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 54–8.

52 Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 63–5, 81.

53 De Castro to Relunia (26 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 30.

54 De Castro to Relunia (26 July 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 30.

despite calls for action from his subordinates and from civil officials who were criticizing the army for its apparent inaction, Peralta refused to rescind the orders to 'lie low'.⁵⁵

Recognizing the dangers of complete inaction, however, some strategies were enacted to mitigate the suffering of the civilian population. When the campaign first began, this involved circulating instructions that repeated earlier advice to stay away from Japanese units. Upon receiving warning from 'home guards' or so-called 'bolo battalions', civilians were to flee to pre-selected hiding places where they were to have already transferred adequate supplies of food, clothing, cooking implements, and other essential commodities. They were to prepare further by hiding or, if necessary, destroying all items of value or any objects which might suggest some kind of association with the resistance movement, like identity slips, travel passes, or emergency notes.⁵⁶ This worked for a short time. However, Japanese commanders soon found the deserted towns and villages they encountered to be a major hindrance to their efforts to obtain information about the organization from civilians and, as a solution, began ordering their troops to burn all vacant houses, shoot all who ran and kill anyone found in hiding so as to persuade civilians to remain at home.⁵⁷ After receiving reports that Japanese units had begun implementing this strategy in Capiz, Peralta adapted his countermeasures accordingly. For example, Lieutenant Valentin Grasparil, who had been advising civilians to evacuate in anticipation of a Japanese expedition in September 1943, was ordered to make sure that civilians remained at home instead, with the exception of those areas where guerrilla bases were located. Civilians were instructed to refrain from any acts that could be perceived as hostile in their interactions with Japanese troops, to cooperate as far as possible without directly acting against the guerrillas, and were allowed to fly Japanese or white flags as a symbol of friendship, though these were to be removed as soon as Japanese patrols vacated the area.⁵⁸

The situation escalated further towards the end of September 1943 when Japanese commanders started threatening and, if unheeded, carrying out wholesale massacres to compel civil officials to officially surrender control of their respective municipalities, towns, or *barrios*. In response, the resistance leadership agreed on a 'liberal policy' towards surrender. Earlier proclamations designating those who lived in Japanese-occupied areas as traitors were temporarily suspended and civilians, but not civil officials or army men, were allowed to surrender without risk of reprisal, provided they remain inwardly loyal and did not act against the organization.⁵⁹ In October 1943, Peralta also authorized a strategy devised by his intelligence operatives that aimed to alleviate suffering by allowing certain civil officials to capitulate and establish so-called 'puppet governments' stacked with men chosen by the guerrillas who would act as double agents by providing intelligence to the organization, feeding disinformation and delaying the

55 For example, Relunia to Peralta (4 October 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 6: Communications from Relunia to Peralta, 1942–3.

56 See, for example, Valentin Grasparil to all Unit Commanders (16 September 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 94: OCA Files.

57 Enemy Information Report (16 September 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 94.

58 For example, Peralta to Grasparil (18 September 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 94.

59 Grasparil to all Unit Commanding Officers (23 September 1943); Confesor to Relunia (11 October 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 10: Communications from Confesor to Relunia, 1943.

implementation of Japanese policies which could hurt the organization within their localities. Intelligence officers were to be stationed in each locality to monitor the 'puppet officials' to ensure continued loyalty and retribution was promised for betrayal.⁶⁰ This policy, enacted against Confesor's wishes, signalled the beginning of the end for amicable relations between the two leaders.⁶¹ It was considered somewhat successful. In November 1943, Relunia reported that due to the policy of allowing surrenders 'massacre has been much reduced in scale'.⁶² Nevertheless, Confesor had correctly predicted that the Japanese would not be easily fooled. Captain Watanabe, for instance, soon realized these were nothing more than tactical surrenders and, in view of this deception, enacted violent reprisals. At this stage of the campaign, Kumai wrote in his memoirs of an infuriated Watanabe who imposed 'heavy sacrifice' (*tadai gisei*) on the civilian population.⁶³

In spite of their efforts to limit the damage caused by Japanese operations and to reduce the suffering of the civilian population, Panay was devastated by the brutal campaign in 1943. According to statistics compiled by the OCA in 1944, between 5,000 and 10,000 men, women, and children were killed, and there had been millions of pesos worth of damage.⁶⁴ For those that survived the onslaught, life became even harder. The widespread destruction of crops and the slaughter of livestock, combined with seasonal typhoons, insect infestations, and bouts of crop disease, exacerbated food shortages and inflation. Death from starvation, privation, or illness was a very real concern in several localities. In their fortnightly reports, OCA field agents recorded in detail the miserable living conditions of the people, many of whom were subsisting on just one meal a day in early 1944.⁶⁵ More troubling and damaging to the organization was that a much larger proportion of the population, 90% in some districts, were now residing in areas under Japanese control and subject to a renewed pacification drive.⁶⁶

In most localities remaining under guerrilla control, morale was low, if not completely shattered and, with the operations having had a paralyzing effect on local government, the people were losing confidence in a leadership that seemed either unable or unwilling to protect them. In a letter to Confesor in November 1943, de Castro warned of the very serious implications this posed for the resistance when he explained that: 'the fight has become a struggle for control of civilians and unless something is done soon, we may find ourselves in an unfortunate situation, where the civilians may not only refuse cooperation but may actually become hostile'.⁶⁷ Indeed, guerrilla units were receiving an increasingly frosty reception from local communities, particularly in areas that were hardest hit during Japanese operations. In the Ninth Administrative District of Iloilo,

60 For details of the scheme, see Unit Report No. 8, CPU Docs., Vol. 94. For Confesor's opposition, see Confesor to Relunia (20 October 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 10.

61 McCoy, 'Politics by Other Means', pp. 214–7.

62 Relunia to Confesor (18 November 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 98: OCA Files; Kumai also acknowledges some success, see Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, p. 85.

63 Kumai, *Firipin no Chi*, pp. 96–7; atrocities were documented by the OCA, see Report on Japanese Atrocities (November 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 202: Panay-Romblon Resistance.

64 Doromal, *War in Panay*, pp. 94–6; see CPU Docs., Vol. 35: Confesor Papers and Vol. 202 for statistics relating to Japanese atrocities.

65 For example, OCA fortnightly reports for Fifth Administrative District, CPU Docs., Vol. 113: OCA Files.

66 OCA fortnightly report (31 January 1944).

67 De Castro to Confesor (30 November 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 30.

for example, the people were reluctant to give supplies or shelter to local units, making it dangerous for army men to travel.⁶⁸ In the Romblon Islands, civilians were actively working with the Japanese to identify local guerrillas and in Capiz, where the government had temporarily ceased to function, the situation had grown particularly grave.⁶⁹ The vast majority of civilians there had become unfriendly and uncooperative, refusing to provide material support and were willingly giving out information about the whereabouts of guerrilla command posts, army hide-outs, and the locations of guerrillas and their family members to Japanese collaborators.⁷⁰ The leadership understood that most civilians had turned 'pro-Japanese' and had stopped aiding the guerrilla army out of fear and for expediency. However, such developments, if left unchecked, would jeopardize the continued existence of the resistance movement. Thus, despite the escalation of their internal conflict, Peralta and Confesor acted quickly in 1944 to implement a series of measures to revive civilian trust in the army, to restore morale, and bring civilians back on side.

Faced with the possible loss of support from civilians, the resistance leadership advocated fighting 'fire with fire' by threatening some violent retaliatory measures. Peralta advised his subordinates that if civilians were refusing to provide food, they should seize it forcefully and to warn that, if necessary, the army would do some 'terrorizing of their own'.⁷¹ In January 1944, Circular No. 1, issued by Lieutenant Serran on behalf of Peralta, stated that 'to ensure the support of the people, THOSE DISLOYAL ELEMENTS WHO MAY CONTAMINATE MUST BE ERADICATED'.⁷² At the same time, Confesor's Executive Secretary, Mariano Benedicto, gave special directions to deputy governors to 'warn civilians all over threatened areas that WE are also going to do some shooting for any disloyalty. Tell them that for every man in any barrio that guides the enemy, we are going to shoot TEN from that barrio ... We have to fight FIRE with FIRE'.⁷³ On 23 February 1944, Confesor further cautioned the people that 'should they become non-cooperative for fear of the Japs, the [provincial guard] units would come back and do some shooting as the Japs do'.⁷⁴ Correspondence between guerrilla commanders and civil officials for early 1944 reveals that, indeed, suspected spies, collaborators, and fifth columnists were more readily 'liquidated' and there was a rise in retaliatory killings on the part of the army men during this period.⁷⁵

68 De Castro to Confesor (30 November 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 30.

69 OCA fortnightly report (15 February 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 121: OCA Files.

70 De Castro to Confesor (20 December 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 100: Panay-Romblon Resistance, 1944 files; Salvador Sevilla to Confesor (21 March 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 115: OCA Files.

71 Peralta to Gamaliel Manikan, CPU Docs., Vol. 13: Miscellaneous memorandum and reports.

72 Circular No. 1 (29 January 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 102: OCA Files, emphasis in original.

73 Benedicto to Deputy Governors (10 January 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 192: WWII – Historical Documents, emphasis in original.

74 Memorandum, Confesor to Deputy Governors (23 February 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 33.

75 Sevilla to Confesor (20 December 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 115; Relunia to all Army Officers and Civil Officials (16 October 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 101; Serran to Pendon (21 February 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 102: OCA Files.

However, records also indicate that, for the most part, the resistance leadership favoured a conciliatory approach in their interactions with a populace that had borne the brunt of the punitive operations and had been pushed to the limits of its endurance. Relunia, for instance, reminded his subordinates that the army was partly to blame for the suffering of the people and, like de Castro and others who observed the civilians' plight first-hand, recommended relief measures to alleviate the suffering of the people 'before the wound gets infected and more serious'.⁷⁶ On this advice, Peralta issued 'Administrative Orders No. 6' on 15 March 1944 which outlined details of financial relief to be paid to victims of Japanese atrocities. A total of 70,000 pesos was set aside for this purpose. Each family would receive 150 pesos for every man aged between 15 and 60 years who had been killed by the Japanese, and 50 pesos for females, children, and elderly family members provided they were not residing in Japanese areas and had never cooperated with Japanese forces.⁷⁷

After repeated criticism from civil officials and even some of his own subordinates for the army's failure to intervene to prevent violence against civilians, Peralta acknowledged to Relunia in February 1944 that in order to restore faith in the resistance leadership; 'WE MUST SHOW SIGNS OF AVENGING ATROCITIES'.⁷⁸ Accordingly, he relaxed the 'lie low' orders somewhat, allowing his troops to engage Japanese soldiers who were committing atrocities but not to interfere with those that did not. Guerrilla units thereafter began sniping at those patrols found harassing civilians and carried out reprisal killings targeting Japanese soldiers and Filipino collaborators to assure the people that the army, while subdued, had not yet been beaten and were still willing to fight for their people. These activities were part of a renewed, dynamic propaganda campaign. Guerrilla propaganda in 1944 featured much of the same rhetoric and used similar techniques to those employed earlier during the occupation; however, there were some key differences which represented a shift in circumstances and priorities. For example, so as to redirect civilian anger away from the organization, the people were encouraged to bombard 'puppet officials' with letters of complaint detailing Japanese brutality and the abysmal conditions many were suffering as a result of the 1943 operations.⁷⁹ Rousing pieces of writing, like Maximo Salvador's poem 'To the Japs' which encouraged resilience and promised retribution, were well publicized as were the vehement and indignant letters written by Confesor to Caram and Jose Laurel, President of the Philippine Republic after independence was granted on 14 October 1943.⁸⁰ The chief focus of guerrilla propaganda efforts at this time, however, lay in the dissemination of accurate war news which was growing ever more positive as the USAFFE continued its advance in the Pacific. In April 1944, the guerrilla army began printing

76 Relunia to all Regimental and Battalion Commanders (26 October 1943), CPU Docs., Vol. 101; De Castro to deputy governors (3 February 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 102.

77 Administrative Order No. 6 (15 March 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 51.

78 Peralta to all Commanding Officers (7 February 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 106: Panay-Romblon Resistance, 1944 Files; Peralta to Relunia (February 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 26: Communications from Peralta, emphasis in original.

79 A letter dated 9 March 1944 produced under the pseudonym, Marietta Gonzales, was circulated by the OCA as an example of what to write. See CPU Docs., Vol. 106: OCA Files.

80 A collection of Salvador's poems can be located in CPU Docs., Vol. 141: Ernesto Golez Papers: 1945 files; Confesor's letters can be seen in CPU Docs., Vol. 39: WWII – Important Communications and Vol. 93: OCA Files.

‘the Coordinator’, a short publication that detailed developments in the war and updates on the progress of MacArthur’s forces.⁸¹ Efforts to persuade the populace of impending victory were substantially assisted by favourable developments on the war front represented by a reduction in the number of Japanese troops in Panay and saw an increase in goods and arms brought into the island covertly through Allied submarine drop-offs. The greater prevalence of American magazines, as well as chocolate bars and cigarettes bearing MacArthur’s image and his infamous promise ‘I Shall Return’, significantly boosted civilian morale in 1944.⁸² In fact, by the middle of the year, OCA men were reporting that civilian confidence in the guerrilla army had largely been restored; the people of Panay were thoroughly convinced that American aid would arrive shortly, that America would ultimately triumph over Japan, and that Panay would be liberated within the year.⁸³ Having ‘weathered the storm’ of the brutal 1943 punitive operations, then, the resistance leadership was able to concentrate their efforts in the final months of occupation on preparations for, what they referred to as, the upcoming ‘Battle of Panay’.

Preparing for Battle

From spring of 1944, Peralta’s main focus was on preparing for MacArthur’s imminent return to the Philippines. This involved repairing roads, railways, and useful military installations; reorganizing and re-training his men; planning for major offensives and pitched battles to be launched on the arrival of the USAFFE; stockpiling arms and military supplies and the constant reconnaissance of Japanese defence preparations to be relayed back to MacArthur.⁸⁴ Though morale was reasonably high and an atmosphere of anticipation prevailed, the resistance leadership did not become complacent about the necessity of maintaining the goodwill of the people. At that time, challenging living conditions persisted, exacerbated by severe food shortages and sharp hikes in prices of everyday commodities. Added to this was mounting friction in the civilian-guerrilla relationship because, with civilians becoming unable, and more unwilling, to provide supplies to the army, enlisted men and some officers were taking to commandeering through force and intimidation to meet their needs. Between May and October 1944, there was a significant rise in the number of abuses reported by civil officials across Panay who warned of a waning tolerance among themselves and the populace in general.⁸⁵ Confesor, whose relations with Peralta had become highly contentious by late 1944, bombarded the latter with complaints about army abuses. While pointing out that the people remained hospitable, he stressed the importance of considering that ‘our people have suffered long and suffered most in this war’.⁸⁶ Such sentiments were echoed by Relunia,

81 Julian Chaves to all Army Officers (1 May 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 138: Ernesto Golez Papers.

82 Montinola to Relunia (15 March 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 27: WWII – Historical and Cultural Matters.

83 See, for example, OCA fortnightly reports (1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 115.

84 Manikan, *Guerrilla Warfare*, pp. 545–58 details these preparations extensively.

85 Fortnightly Report (27 July 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 165: WWII – Historical Documents – Ramon Bayona Files.

86 Confesor to all Combat Team Commanders (9 May 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 116; *Guerrilla Resistance Movement in the Philippines*, pp. 46–51.

who chastened his men when he heard of uncontrolled commandeering when famine loomed in Panay and reiterated that '[t]he productivity, morale, cooperation and help of the civil populace is what we must [seek] and encourage'.⁸⁷

To diffuse this potentially explosive situation, Peralta sent a series of letters to civilians and civil officials apologizing for the poor conduct of his men. He entreated the people to have a little more patience with the army and promised that complaints and reports of abuse would be addressed, personally in the case of the much less common, but much graver, incidents of rape and murder.⁸⁸ OCA agents and military police units were directed to investigate and, where possible, resolve minor disputes amicably while more serious cases were to be referred to military courts where offenders would be tried and punished for their crimes. Commanding officers were directed to focus their attention on maintaining discipline, to remove offending units from their areas, inform military police of complaints made by civilians, and enact policies designed to limit opportunities for abuse.⁸⁹ Peralta also advised civil officials that, rather than simply complaining of abuses, they should take proactive steps to remedy the chief cause of uncontrolled commandeering: food shortages.⁹⁰ Thereafter, civil officials implemented strategies to increase food production. In the Sixth Administrative District, for instance, the people were encouraged to make 'home gardens' and prizes were awarded for the best gardens.⁹¹ Enlisted men were also instructed to 'plant, plant, plant' as an example for civilians and there were restrictions on the movement of foodstuffs.⁹² By October 1944, when the USAFFE initiated their assault on Japanese forces in Leyte, the situation was back under control. A good harvest had alleviated the competition for food and island-wide military operations had begun, occupying both the army and civilians who had been encouraged by President Sergio Osmeña, who recently returned to the Philippines with MacArthur, to actively participate in the liberation of their country.⁹³

In late 1944, though no longer working together, the resistance leaders both began actively mobilizing the people of Panay to fulfil vital logistical and supportive functions as the army began, for the first time, to engage Japanese forces in full-scale, pitched battles. Labour pools were created, for example, to assist in the rapid construction of make-shift hospitals, to transport medical supplies, to carry stretchers of wounded, and to help bury bodies.⁹⁴ On 25 October 1944, Confesor authored a piece, published in *Ang Tigbatas*, which further incited the people to 'rise up and strike the enemy'. Civilians were urged to act against spies, collaborators, and traitors by pointing them out to the appropriate authorities, to identify concentrations of Japanese troops and hide-

87 Relunia to all Commanding Officers (24 June 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 103.

88 Peralta to Mayors of Antique (18 June 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 105: OCA Files; Peralta to the People of Panay (25 July 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 62: Romulo Lazo papers.

89 Ernesto Golez to Commanders of the S-2 Battalion and Military Police Unit (14 August 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 62.

90 Peralta to Mayors of Antique (18 June 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 105.

91 Bayona to all Mayors (19 August 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 165.

92 Peralta to all Commanders (July 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 103.

93 President Sergio Osmeña (October 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 199: WWII – Historical Documents.

94 Confesor to Deputy Governors (30 August 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 165.

outs, to assist in sabotage work by attacking enemy food supplies and lines of communication and, most importantly, to stop working for the Japanese, stop selling or giving them food and supplies, and refuse to carry their loads.⁹⁵ Peralta was more cautious in his approach. After the deaths of several civilians during the US bombardment of Iloilo City, Mandurriao Landing Field, and Tiring Airfield on 13 and 14 September, the measures he enacted with respect to the general populace concentrated on ensuring their protection and safety during the anticipated battles. Earlier in the year, commanders had received notice to begin planning for the evacuation of civilians should full-scale combat break-out in the island.⁹⁶ In September, they were directed to implement their plans and a memorandum was circulated among the people advising them not to get 'caught in the storm'. Civilians were to evacuate all coastal areas and all Japanese-controlled areas, taking with them sufficient money, food, clothing, and other personal necessities. 'Asylums for refuge' were to be established at convenient places to offer comfort and security to incoming evacuees. All civilians, including those deemed traitors for having lived in Japanese areas since the beginning of the occupation, were to be welcomed and were assured that, provided they give full cooperation and follow instructions conscientiously, they would be treated with respect. They were, however, warned that the army would not tolerate any kind of obstructions in their operations. As such, civilians should stay away from airfields, highways, enemy garrisons, or military installations for in those areas they would be 'liable to arrest and subject to grilling investigations'.⁹⁷ Indeed, while the resistance leadership generally adopted a forgiving attitude towards those people who had, for whatever reasons, opted to reside in Japanese-controlled areas of Panay, they maintained a watchful eye over those now evacuating. Check-points were set up to register incoming evacuees and investigate suspicious characters. Any person who was found to have been a spy, fifth columnist or active collaborator was detained, though not executed at this stage, in concentration camps to await trial and punishment after the war.⁹⁸ Once the fighting had begun in October 1944, with the exception of some die-hard pro-Japanese civilians and active collaborators, most people began to evacuate to guerrilla-controlled areas. The resistance leadership, then, were fairly successful in their efforts to mobilize the support of or, at the least, assert their control over the civilian population of Panay up to the final days of the occupation. With the backing of the people, the operations in late 1944 and early 1945 progressed smoothly and favourably and, as noted in the introduction, by the time the USAFFE arrived in March 1945, the situation was in-hand. Japanese troops were in retreat and could offer no meaningful opposition to the guerrilla-USAFFE liberation campaign.

The notable accomplishments of the Panay guerrilla resistance movement were rooted in the leadership's appreciation of the importance of civilians in a guerrilla-style conflict. As they prepared for a prolonged and arduous war of attrition in Panay, these men understood that a shared nationality and common enemy did not guarantee support; the guerrilla army was a burden that added substantially to wartime hardships. The loyalty of the

95 *Ang Tigbatas* (25 October 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 59.

96 Memorandum (May 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 101.

97 Memorandum to the People of Panay (25 September 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 103.

98 Memorandum (11 October 1944), CPU Docs., Vol. 210: Ramon Maza Papers.

people had to be won, but most importantly, it had to be continually maintained by adapting to changes in local circumstances, as well as the wider geopolitical context which influenced civilian sentiments. Their success in this endeavour lay in the fact that mobilizing civilians in support of the resistance movement was never subordinate to overall military objectives. It was as, if not more, important to the achievements of the resistance movement. The resistance leadership kept close contact with civilians, monitored their living conditions, heard and responded to their complaints, and watched closely for changes in their attitudes and morale. Based on regular, detailed reports, they were able to act swiftly to relieve wartime pressure, counter Japanese anti-guerrilla activities and preserve civilian morale.

For the most part, the leadership employed a variety of primarily conciliatory measures. An intensive propaganda campaign was carried out for the duration of the occupation to cultivate a strong belief in a shared struggle, relief measures were enacted to alleviate the pressures of wartime conditions, discipline of enlisted men remained a priority to reduce ill-feeling about the burdens of supporting a guerrilla army, and incentives were offered to reward civilians for their patience and endurance. Although they generally favoured pacification methods, the resistance leaders were also prepared to tighten their grip on the population through force and intimidation and, when the civilian-guerrilla relationship appeared to be at its most tenuous, were willing to resort to violence. Movements, food and vital daily commodities were highly regulated; policies that infringed on the daily lives of civilians were enacted in service of the army; retaliation was threatened, and if deemed necessary or salutary, carried out; and finally, those deemed to be collaborating with the Japanese were arrested, divested of their possessions and detained, if not 'liquidated', as an example to other would-be 'traitors'. The inclination towards more violent measures at certain periods during the occupation was clearly a reaction to Japanese counter-measures, which threatened the leadership's hold over, and strained their relationship with, the people. The brief consideration of 'fighting fire with fire' in response to the devastating punitive operations conducted by Japanese forces in 1943 is indicative of the significance of the interplay between the guerrilla and anti-guerrilla strategies employed by belligerents in this kind of war to the victimization of civilians. More importantly, it draws attention to the high potential for escalation and radicalization of violence towards civilians in this type of warfare.⁹⁹ In this case, however, positive changes in local conditions and the favourable progression of the war alleviated shortages, eased tensions, and boosted morale which enabled civilians to endure the demands of the guerrillas a while longer. The macro- and micro-level context in which guerrilla warfare occurs, then, is vital to our understanding of the victimization of civilians in this type of conflict.

Acknowledgements


The research for this article was generously supported by the Institute of Philippine Culture at Ateneo de Manila University. The author is grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable insights and comments.

99 For further information regarding Japanese violence towards civilians in Panay, see Kelly Maddox, "'An Island of Killing and Slaughter': Anti-Guerrilla Warfare and Civilian-Targeted Violence in Panay, 1943', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 55 (2020), pp. 535–56.

Funding

The author received financial support for the research of this article from the Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University as part of the IPC Postdoctoral Scholarly Research Award.

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