

Renato Constantino: WW2 Hero

Submitted to

“RENATO CONSTANTINO REVISITED: A Forum on the Role of Dissent in Development, the Usable Past, and his Lifelong Romance with Letizia Roxas-Constantino in pursuit of National Liberation”

UP College of Media and Communication Auditorium, Plaridel Hall Annex, Diliman, QC
18 April 2026, Saturday, 2:00-5:00PM

BERNARD KARGANILLA

- Corporate Secretary, Hunters-ROTC Historical Society
- Coordinator, UP Manila Graduate Program in Management, 2008-2022, 2024-present
- Columnist, *Malaya Business Insight*, a Philippine national newspaper
- One U.P. Professorial Chair Award in the Social Sciences for Outstanding Teaching and Public Service in the University of the Philippines Manila, 2022-2024
- Member, Global Thursday Forum Steering Committee
- EVP and Spokesman, Philippine Council of Management, 2015-present
- Editor/writer, *Unsundered 2: The Hunters-ROTC Guerrillas*, Manila: National Historical Commission of the Philippines, 2021
- Co-author, *Valor: Working Virtue Of Fidelity To Country*, Manila: AV Manila Creative Production Co., 2017
- Co-author, *Kasaysayan ng Filipinas at mga Institusyong Filipino*, QC: UP SWF, 2003
- Author, *Justice and the Comfort Women*, Manila: Manila Studies Program, College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines Manila, 2003
- Co-author, *Under Japanese Rule: Memories and Reflections*, Edited by Renato Constantino (Quezon City: Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1992)

The Anti-Imperialist

Even without meeting or interacting or being mentored by him, one can (with diligence) assemble a pattern of thoughts on Japanese Imperialism.

He was, for starters, a delegate to one of the pre-war Philippines-Japan Student Conferences in Tokyo (April 15, 1937, the First Oriental Students' Conference) where a cop yelled at him for rubber-necking as the procession of the Tenno (Hirohito) ran through the streets of the capital. Witnessing Oriental despotism in action.

Next, we have this wartime entry from the Diary of Felipe Buencamino III, March 14, 1942, Bataan, HQ, MIS: “Three U.P. boys are here. They are Angel Baking, Teddy Lansang, and Renato Constantino. They want to join our service. They are sergeants. Leonie was indifferent about taking them in. ‘What can these U.P. guys do, anyway?’ he asked Fred jokingly because Fred comes from U.P. The General asked me if the three fellows are O.K. because he does not know them. I told them the three were good writers and editors at one time or another of a paper called *Collegian*.”

"I told the General to take them in and I would answer for them because I believe they are intelligent fellows...I pointed out that maybe we could use them for some mission in Manila."

"The three U.P. boys are all right. They are regular fellows. I don't know why there is so much tiff between the *Guidon* and the *Collegian*. It's just a case of not knowing each other. Constantino showed me a diary with a drawing of his girl's face. He is in love with her. I think she is a niece of Speaker Roxas. Lansang sketched her face."
[<https://philippinediaryproject.com/1942/03/14/march-14-1942/>]

When Bataan fell, Constantino was in Manila on a behind-enemy-lines mission. Later, he would re-join the open society, marry his sweetheart and build a family. But he never left the military intelligence service. It was a cat-and-mouse game and there were a few close calls. When his unit was rolled up by the Kempeitai, he joined the guerrillas.

Thus the deadly game was played until the first quarter of 1945 when Manila (after a month of Japanese rampage) was recovered by the Allies. By the third quarter of the last year of World War II, Constantino was no longer a CEGP activist, but a full-fledged member of the Fourth Estate. Samples:

In "Ideological Battleground," Philippine Foreign Affairs Review, Vol. I, No. 1, July 1945, Constantino examined the Polish Question as a determinant of Anglo-American-Soviet collaboration. In "Functions of Leadership," Philippine Weekly, Issue No. 2, July 1945, he opined, "For if democracy is to remain a democracy leadership must be based on a proper understanding of the masses."

Thirteen days after the Voice of the Crane warbled over the airwaves (Imperial Rescript of 15 August 1945 aka Hirohito surrender broadcast), Constantino penned the Editorial for the Express, Vol. I, No. 39, August 28, 1945: "In the civilian and guerrilla resistance against the enemy, the masses realized the value of cooperation in the different guerrilla groups it organized and recognized the strength and the benefits of unified action. This is an important stage in the mass metamorphosis. The mass has risen to the level of organization. This in a large measure will act as an effective factor in broadening the base of our democracy."

This was an astute analysis of the essence of the mass-based guerrilla movement of the Philippines and a portent of the added qualification for wannabe officials in the immediate postwar establishment. What did you do during the Japanese Occupation?

On the last day of WW2 (when Hirohito's minions signed the Japanese surrender documents aboard the *USS Missouri* in Tokyo Bay), Constantino critiqued the "Politics of the Young," Philippine Progress, Vol. I, No. 11, September 2, 1945: "Youth, we have been told time and again, is dynamic and progressive. But what do we see? We see this dynamism frittered away if not actually perverted in politics of the cheapest sort, in coffee-house meetings devoted to endless discussions of what this or that prominent can-

didate for high office can expect to get in this or that province in the way of votes. Those who term themselves youth leaders, and are publicized in news-sheets as such, gravitate merely around the 'political horses' they are betting on in the coming race, instead of rallying around concrete programs of action responsibly prepared to attain a specific public good."

Nearly a week after Yamashita's surrender to the Filipino guerrillas, Constantino in "Reconstruction Amplified," Editorial, Express, September 9, 1945, succinctly defined the nature of WWII: "...This war was a war against Fascism, against greed, against injustice, against reaction and all that the term implies. The war, as a matter of fact, was a revolution, a world revolution against the forces of reaction."

Very clear. No if's and but's. The Second World War was the Global Anti-Fascist War of the 1940s. That means it was never enough to name that period in our history as merely the Japanese Occupation. Should be World War II in the Philippines.

Two months after the official end of WW2, we get a glimpse of Constantino the Historian who catalogued the "Forces of Conservatism," The Sunday Post Magazine Section, November 4, 1945: "History has recorded for us the incessant struggles between the forces of conservatism and progress, of reaction and revolution, whether peaceful or violent, constitutes a leap in the evolutionary process towards progress; conservatism inevitably culminates in reaction and strives to maintain the status quo, nay, brings back the past with the result that man suffers maladjustments due to the imposition of outworn ideologies on a society so different from that which gave rise to these beliefs and ideals that whereas they were the mainstay of our forefathers, they now serve merely as fetters to our progress."

That very month, the Manila Chronicle and other newspapers reported on the Yamashita Trial, the massacre of more than 1,000 civilians in St. Paul's College in Manila and mass rapes in Ermita. Thus, I find it curious that Constantino still had to enumerate the "Obligations of the Filipino Intellectual," The Philippine-American (a Raymond House Publication), November 1945, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 37-39: "The absence of the crusading spirit among a great number of our intellectuals may be attributed to four main causes. First, aside from those regard their professions as mere instruments of livelihood, there are those who, while recognizing the need for militancy, consider the attainment of security and an established reputation in their profession as prerequisites to militant action. Second, the majority of our intellectuals have themselves been shaped by institutions whose tenets and ideals have been outmoded. Third, they have divided themselves into different professional groups, the great majority holding themselves aloof from politics and the affairs of government. And fourth, they have cut themselves off from the masses of the people, and the gap thus created has never been adequately bridged."

Apathetic? Careerists? Why are these learned men lacking or devoid of the crusading spirit? The original United Nations had just concluded the shooting or violent part of its mission to eradicate Hitlerism. Were these so-called intellectuals endemic to

Grassroots Fascism?

Be that as it may, when the year ended, Constantino satirized the so-called suffering of the rich during the Japanese Occupation in "The Poor Rich," *The Monthly Post*, December 1945, p. 13: "...They (the poor rich) are so much in love with the non-essentials. They have so taken for granted the essentials of life that the non-essentials have become the essentials. And since desire begets desire, the non-essentials pile up till their life is cluttered up with them...so these poor rich suffer, more acutely perhaps, from lack of the superfluities which to them have become the necessities of life."

The rough draft of History. Courtesy of Constantino.

In the immediate postwar period, we also begin to see more clearly the evolution of Constantino as the foremost intellectual of Philippine self-determination. Consider his take on "Progressive Nationalism," *The Sunday Post Magazine Section*, January 13, 1946, pp. 2-3, that there are different kinds of nationalism:

a. Japanese Fascism: "The Japanese Fascists and warlords, under the guise of intense and fanatical nationalism, led their people into a war which resulted in the conquest and enslavement of other Orientals on whom they imposed ideals, traditions, and institutions in general alien to the latter's mode of life."

b. Western Imperialism: "A greater contradiction between the principles of nationalism and the selfish interests for whose furtherance the nationalist sentiment is evoked in the majority of the people of a country was England struggling for what she called her 'national survival' against the Nazi juggernaut and the Japanese war machine, and rallying to her support an enslaved and exploited India. Obviously, the contradiction lies in what Britain is pleased to call her national survival is predicated on the continued suppression of nationalist India."

c. sane nationalism for the Philippines: "Just as the strength of a country lies in the united spirit of its people, so the true culture of a nation springs from the collective effort of the majority. Both can be realized only when the barriers between the exploiters and the exploited are torn down and the nation is provided with a driving force towards complete unity in the form of a more equitable distribution of wealth and leisure."

More particularly, Constantino is the foremost critic, analyst and explainer of Japanese Imperialism. And its effects on Filipinos. In fact, I first grasped the reality that education is a weapon from the third section of *The Miseducation of the Filipino* (*Weekly Graphic*, June 8, 1966):

"Capturing Minds. The most effective means of subjugating a people is to capture their minds. Military victory does not necessarily signify conquest. As long as feelings of resistance remain in the hearts of the vanquished, no conqueror is secure. This is best illustrated by the occupation of the Philippines by the Japanese militarists during the second world war. Despite the terroristic regime imposed by the Japanese warlords, the

Filipinos were never conquered. Hatred for the Japanese was engendered by their oppressive techniques which in turn were intensified by the stubborn resistance of the Filipino people. Japanese propagandists and psychological warfare experts, however, saw the necessity of winning the minds of the people. Had the Japanese stayed a little longer, Filipino children who were being schooled under the auspices of the new dispensation would have grown into strong pillars of the Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Their minds would have been conditioned to suit the policies of the Japanese imperialists."

The odyssey of Renato Constantino as a Filipino Guerrilla in the Global Anti-Fascist War, as wordsmith, as historian and as educator converged in two major works: *The Continuing Past* (co-authored with Letizia Roxas-Constantino) and *The Second Invasion* (1st and 2nd editions).

The first six chapters of *The Continuing Past* is World War II in the Philippines. Here I learned many important historical facts that are still absent in Philippine school-books and ignored in the regurgitated factoids from so-called WW2 scholars. Some gems:

1. Quezon's Defense Secretary Teofilo Sison was convicted by the People's Court. (p. 180)
2. There were three guerrilla groups in the Democratic Alliance: HUKBALAHAP, Free Philippines, Blue Eagles (p. 182)
3. According to Emilio Aguinaldo, Manuel Roxas was the "hope of those who faced prosecution for treason." (p. 185)
4. Don Vicente Madrigal prospered during the Japanese Occupation and was subsequently imprisoned for collaboration. (pp. 186-187)

As for the other major work, the *Second Invasion* was supposed to have a Third Edition. Constantino never neglected the evolution of Japanese Imperialism, following the twists and turns in LDP politics, reading the Japanese dailies, visiting Japan. I was privileged to accompany him in the spring of 1993, interviewing PM Hosokawa, exploring the Temple of the 47 Ronins.

Moreover, Constantino monitored and commented on WW2-related events in the last decade of the 20th century.

1. "Ominous moves," Manila Bulletin, April 17, 1994 (critique of Hosokawa)
2. "The reoccupation," Manila Bulletin, July 27, 1994 (Leyte landing)
3. "Expanding the UNSC," Manila Bulletin, October 16, 1994 (Japan does not deserve to join the United Nations Security Council)
4. "Footnotes on Leyte," Manila Bulletin, October 23, 1994
5. "Junior partner," Manila Bulletin, October 10, 1993 (Japan's role)
6. "Evading Responsibility," Manila Bulletin, January 11, 1995 (Japan's forgetfulness)
7. "The victors," Manila Bulletin, August 13, 1995 (Hiroshima)
8. "War compensation," Manila Bulletin, August 16, 1995

In addition to *The Continuing Past* and the *Second Invasion*, Constantino's third major work on this subject is *Fascism: Prospect and Retrospect*, which came out in the ferment of the pre-martial law period. It was badly needed at that time because activists were quick to label any enemy as fascist. I even read a manifesto on a leaflet of that period identifying State Fascism as one of the Five Ills of Philippine Society (the other four being American Imperialism, domestic feudalism, bureaucrat-capitalism, and Japanese Militarism). Fast forward to the late Eighties-early Nineties, when my Professor-Mentor asked me to suggest a work to be reprinted, it was *Fascism: Prospect and Retrospect* which I named.

In 1992, Constantino brought Angelito L. Santos, Joan Orendain, Helen W. Mendoza, and yours truly together as co-authors of *Under Japanese Rule: Memories And Reflections*. FHL-Roderick Hall describes the book as follows:

"Four pieces on the Japanese occupation from different perspectives. Santos' chapter ("Gleanings from a Cruel War") attempts to provide a framework to the experience, using a few interviews and his readings on some relevant works. Orendain ("Children of War") presents the Japanese occupation as seen by children and youths (she was one of them). Mendoza's chapter ("Looking Back: Days of War") is in three parts, the first are glimpses into the death march from eyewitness testimonies; the second is the saga of four brothers arrested by the Kempeitai, and the third is on her family's experience, beginning in Zamboanga and evacuating by boat to Iloilo and then on to Luzon. The last chapter ("Witness"), by Bernard Karganilla, shows how his students' perceptions of the war differed from their elders'; he tried to make his students discover the truth by interviewing eyewitnesses of the occupation. His article presents highlights of these interviews, dividing them into common experiences (the start of the war, Nipponization, ethnic stories, women in war, friendly Japanese and others). The four essays were written and compiled in an effort to keep the lessons and memories of the war alive, and to particularly show the Filipino experience to the Japanese." [<https://fhl.omeka.net/items/show/776>]

Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn on mentorship: "Teaching is not just about imparting knowledge; it's about inspiring growth!" Hence, more items in the Constantino product line.

- (1) Tsuda Mamoru, *A Preliminary Study of Japanese-Filipino Joint Ventures*, Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978
- (2) Allen, James S., *The Radical Left On The Eve Of War: A Political Memoir*, Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1985
- (3) Ballescas, Ma. Rosario P., *Filipino Entertainers In Japan: An Introduction*, Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1992

I miss the Master.

