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## **Laurel: The Political Philosopher and the Man**

Rolando M. Gripaldo

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## Laurel: The Political Philosopher and the Man

ROLANDO M. GRIPALDO

In judging Laurel, we can ask questions and questions. And the answers will never be satisfactory. Always there will loom that once innocuous but now potent phrase, *under the circumstances*.

— Manuel E. Buenafe,  
*Wartime Philippines*, 1950

The purpose of this article is to examine whether Laurel the political philosopher *is* Laurel the man, or putting it in another way, whether Laurel lived out his political philosophy especially during the Japanese occupation. The development of Laurel's political ideas occurred prior to World War II in a series of addresses and articles compiled in a book entitled *Assertive Nationalism*<sup>1</sup> and in his provocative *Politico-Social Problems*.<sup>2</sup> The only book Laurel published during the Japanese period, in particular during the time he was the Commissioner of the Interior, was *Forces that Make a Nation Great*,<sup>3</sup> although the attempt at formulating systematically his ideas on moral and political philosophy was in the making while he was confined at the Sugamo prison.<sup>4</sup> The political ideas

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For abbreviations used in footnotes, see last page of the article.

1. *AN* (Manila: National Teachers' College, 1931).

2. *PSP* (Manila: National Teachers' College, 1936).

3. *FMNG* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1943).

4. This was ultimately published as *MPO* (Manila: Bardavon Book Company, 1949) or "Political and Moral Philosophy," in *JPLS*, ed. Jose A. Lansang (Manila: Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation, Inc., 1970). Vitaliano R. Gorospe, S.J., "Laurel's Political and Moral Philosophy," *Philippine Studies* 11 (1963): 419-28.

Laurel developed in his post-war books<sup>5</sup> were primarily reassertion, elaboration, and application of his pre-war political thought, though in the process new political insights came into being.

In the discussion that follows I will first deal with Laurel as a political thinker; then I will go to Laurel as a man — not only as a philosopher (in many aspects, i.e., political, ethical, educational, cosmological, etc.), but also as a child, a student in school, a husband, and above all as leader of the government in a most critical period of the country's history. The third section of the discussion will focus on Laurel as a political thinker and Laurel as a man, particularly during the Japanese occupation; and finally I will give some concluding remarks.

### LAUREL THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER

It has been said that no man is an island. Even Robinson Crusoe had his man Friday. A person "kept in solitary confinement," said Laurel, "and denied contact with the outside world degenerates, becomes clumsy in the use of rational faculties, and eventually loses them."<sup>6</sup> It is this fear of solitude and its positive source, which sociologists call the instinct of gregariousness, that make man seek the society and fellowship of his kind.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence, rude gatherings of family units are formed, which gradually broaden into gens or tribal clans, and ultimately culminate in complex governments of more recent times.

The surrender of individual power to the legal and moral power of the whole as represented by the state is the essence of all governments. "Man as a social and political being," Laurel explained, "has to live under some government organized and maintained by the collective will of himself and his fellow citizens."<sup>8</sup> The supreme attribute of the state is force which in a democracy is

5. *BF* (Manila: n. p., 1953); *EWD* (Manila: Manila Times Publishing Co., 1956); *MEO* (Manila: The Lyceum Press, Inc., 1959); *TO* (Manila: n.p., 1958); *WM* (Manila: Jose P. Laurel Memorial Foundation, Inc., 1962); and *CMC* (Manila: Lyceum of the Philippines Publications and Research Office, 1965). *WM* is not exactly a post-war book but I simply include it in this list because it came off the press in 1962. The same case holds with *MPO*. See in this connection Remigio E. Agpalo, "Pro Deo et Patria: The Political Philosophy of Jose P. Laurel," *Asian Studies* 3 (1965): 170.

6. *MPO*, p. 30.

7. *PSP*, p. 1. See also *FMNG*, p. 9, and *MPO*, p. 30.

8. *FMNG*, p. 10.

neither irksome nor oppressive since sovereignty emanates from the people: "In a democracy, the individual sacrifices his freedom so that he may attain greater freedom for the whole."<sup>9</sup>

Quite interestingly, "while man cannot get along without his fellowmen, he cannot, in actual life, get along well with them."<sup>10</sup> In association there is antagonism: people differ in temperaments, ideals, and ideas; they differ in thought and in action; and conflict of interests arises among themselves. The necessity for certain rules of ethical behavior is therefore imperative and unavoidable in the relationship between man and man. These rules may be self-imposed by the individual and where they are dictated by some external authority, they take the form of laws, customs, and traditions.

Law and order are the foundation stone of governmental structures.<sup>11</sup> Government efficiency is gauged by the way in which laws are carried out and order preserved. Law differentiates between what is good and what is evil, between what is just and what is unjust. The support and maintenance of the government by the people entail the protection of the people from injustice. According to Laurel, "If law should be taken away or abolished, all things will fall into confusion."<sup>12</sup>

The law is likewise the boundary between the government's prerogative or authority and the people's liberty. The government's prerogative is the cover and defence of the people's liberty while "the people by their liberty are enabled to be the foundation to the prerogative."<sup>13</sup> If the prerogative of the government prevails over the liberty of the people, then we have tyranny, and if the liberty of the people prevails over the government's prerogative, then we have anarchy. The required balance between authority and liberty should be achieved by the citizen through education and personal discipline in order that the resultant equilibrium, i.e., peace and order and happiness for all, be established.<sup>14</sup>

Democracy nowadays means a representative type of popular government, otherwise known as republicanism.<sup>15</sup> Its only source

9. *PSP*, p. 1.

10. *MPO*, p. 30.

11. *PSP*, p. 11; *FMNG*, p. 25.

12. *AN*, p. 154.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

14. Benjamin Dionisio, ed., *GT* (Manila: Bardavon Book Company, 1949), p. 31.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 91 and 105; *PSP*, p. 37.

of political power is the people who are sovereign, although the exercise of this sovereignty is delegated by the people to their representatives. The people, i.e. male and female citizens of the country, do not literally govern themselves: there must be a government to do the governing for them: "the right to govern themselves means merely their right to alter or amend their government, or to replace it with a new one. . . through lawful and legal means. . ." <sup>16</sup>

Laurel likened popular government to a three-story building:

. . . the basic foundation is the people; the first story is the constitution which is the expression of their sovereignty; the second is the officialdom or a group of constitutional care-takers of the edifice; and in the third and highest story is found the altar wherein is zealously kept and guarded the mystic fire which symbolizes the faith of the people. Collapse of the foundation means destruction of the entire building; collapse of the first story is necessarily the collapse of the second and third stories and the consequent reversion to the architectonic wisdom of the people; collapse of the second story – officialdom – because of misdeeds or disloyalty, is the demolition of the faith of the people; and without faith, no popular government can ever hope to live and survive. <sup>17</sup>

Representation, renovation, and control constitute the essence of republicanism. The people elect their representatives to *represent* them in government. These representatives have a fixed tenure and their reelection is limited to avoid the evil of perpetuating themselves in office. They are, in other words, periodically *renovated*, i.e., regularly checked, examined, or changed through the election process. The people's ultimate *control* over their government "implies not only the adoption of a clean and wise system of election, but also the civic and educational preparation of the citizens to participate intelligently in the affairs of their government." <sup>18</sup>

Laurel favored the separation of church and state unless there is unity of religion, because the "union of church and state is prejudicial to both, for occasions might arise when the state will use the church, and the church the state, as a weapon in the furtherance of their respective ends and aims." <sup>19</sup>

16. *AN*, p. 144.

17. *PSP*, pp. 23-24.

18. *MPO*, p. 50. See *BF*, pp. 12-13.

19. *GT*, p. 44. See *MPO*, p. 54.

The state exists for the individual and not vice versa, so the paramount concern of the state is the protection of the integrity and dignity of man. "Public officials," said Laurel, "should not dwell in an ivory tower, aloof and unconcerned about the sufferings and injustices around them."<sup>20</sup> Public welfare, social justice, or the promotion of the common good is the sole purpose of government.<sup>21</sup> This common good must not only be in terms of material prosperity but also in terms of intellectual development and moral perfection. Man, after all, does not live by bread alone: "For the bread of the stomach is only part of the bread of life which contains as its elements the nourishment and growth of the mind and the spirit."<sup>22</sup>

#### FUNCTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

The vital functions of government have been classified under four headings: health, justice, education, and opportunity. Laurel wrote:

The true yardstick by which the goodness and efficiency of a government or an administration are measured is its actual accomplishment in terms of the people's livelihood (health), enjoyment of material and moral rewards for their efforts (justice), development of their potentialities (education), and realization of their aspirations to success and happiness under an atmosphere of order and security (opportunity).<sup>23</sup>

Laurel is for state socialism if by that is meant the assumption by the state of overwhelming powers in order to uphold the ideals of national welfare and national defense, and to minimize or eradicate hunger and poverty, the great enemies of government.

I am for State Socialism, if by State Socialism is meant the adoption by the State of measures intended to establish social and economic equilibrium so that social and political upheavals may be avoided and carnage and revolution prevented.<sup>24</sup>

Once a government is set up, whatever be its form, it becomes the obligation of every individual within that government "to give

20. *MPO*, p. 34. See *AN*, p. 153.

21. *FMNG*, pp. 25-26; *GT*, p. 37; *MPO*, p. 46; *PSP*, p. 19. Cf. *AN*, p. 153.

22. *MPO*, p. 59.

23. *BF*, p. 15. This elaborates the notion of "public welfare."

24. *PSP*, pp. 166-67. See in this connection *MPO*, p. 51, and "Political and Moral Philosophy," p. 29.

it formal allegiance, obey its authority, abide by all laws and regulations promulgated through its manifold powers, and protect and defend its existence and integrity.”<sup>25</sup> The enjoyment of human rights hinges on the premise that citizens willingly carry out their obligations to the government; e.g., the honest paying of taxes, observance of laws, sincere performance of public service by both professionals and public servants, etc.<sup>26</sup>

It is not enough that a citizen does not violate the rules, regulations, and ordinances of government, he must also see to it that these are observed by the community. In the words of Laurel:

Passive inaction or intolerance is worse than actual and flagrant infringement of the law of the land, for in the latter case the law itself provides a remedy and administers a corrective to the erring individual. But the law is powerless to deal with that type of citizen who is so wanting in civic courage that he allows crime to be committed in his presence without even lifting a finger to prevent its execution, who is so lacking in civic pride that he tolerates the evils of vice and graft in the community, without doing anything to put a stop to them; who has such a distorted sense of civic values that so long as his selfish pursuits are unmolested he does not give a thought to whatever happens to his neighbors or to the rest of his fellow citizens for that matter; and who does not care whether or not there is such a thing as “government” at all.<sup>27</sup>

The foundation of good government is morality, the basis of which is righteousness. Righteousness is an inner impulse by which we act or refrain from acting out of respect and reverence for law and out of purity of motives, i.e., without fear or anticipation of reward. Righteousness is not only the guiding principle of individual morality, it is also the sole principle of social relationship and action: “social morality is individual morality collectivized.”<sup>28</sup>

Each generation should attend to its own political problems. After all, “the political aphorism of one generation is doubted by the next, and entirely discarded by the third.”<sup>29</sup> But every generation must bear in mind that the path to a healthy political and economic growth and progress lies in balancing and synchronizing the development of social and economic forces so as to avoid the

25. *FMNG*, p. 10. It seems that civil disobedience is not possible here.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11 and 25; *AN*, pp. 42 and 207-8; *CMC*, p. 24.

27. *FMNG*, pp. 25-26.

28. *MPO*, p. 30.

29. *PSP*, pp. 23 and 213; *GT*, p. 46.

overdevelopment of some factors at the expense of others that are equally essential. The derelictions of duty (social) and evasion of tax obligations (economic), e.g., must be voluntarily reduced by citizens of each generation.<sup>30</sup>

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The main prop of a democratic state is sound municipal administration. The success or failure of the central government in a democracy depends largely upon the workings of the government of local units.<sup>31</sup> Paternalism has been the policy adopted by the Philippine government as regards the provinces and municipalities; this is not healthy because the latter become constant supplicants for insular help. As Laurel argued:

This paternalism is common in the Philippine Islands and finds expression not only in our laws and institutions, but also in our customs and traditions. We are born and reared, then sent to school at the expense of our parents; we reach maturity and marry, and yet we continue to live under the parental roof. . . . I think. . . .we need more of individualism, self-reliance, and self-dependence.<sup>32</sup>

Historically local government is anterior to the state: the city had to give way to the state. If the power of the central government is absolute, then in the absence of constitutional requirements, there is no right to local self-government. Laurel, however, advocated local autonomy. He believed that provinces and municipalities must not depend on the central government for funds but rather they must raise their own local revenue and must determine their own local policies. According to Laurel, "The less supervision there is, the less will be the occasion for antagonism and friction between the State and the local government."<sup>33</sup> Laurel cautioned us, however, that the local self-government he advocated is one which is compatible with the highest interests of the central government, for "a national government, strong and vigorous, without municipal autonomy, is preferable to a national government, anemic and weak, with municipal self-government."<sup>34</sup>

30. *FMNG*, pp. 9-10.

31. *AN*, p. 157.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 123. See *PSP*, pp. 18-19.

33. *AN*, p. 195.

34. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

Powers of local government may be enumerated and clearly specified. What Laurel nonetheless thought to be more effective is a general grant of powers and an enumeration of restrictions. In this way frequent amendments of local laws will be avoided and constant supplication for extension of more powers by local governments at the Philippine legislature will be stopped.

No popular election can guarantee that the person elected to head the administrative organization or a municipality is an expert administrator. The city manager plan allows the employment of an expert as the head of the city's administrative machinery. Under this plan, an elective council "appoints a manager who holds office at the pleasure of the council, appoints the heads of the different departments of the city, supervises the works of these departments, and stands responsible to the council for the successful management of the city's business." The manager appointed must be one who is eminently qualified both by training and experience to run the people's affairs. The city manager plan "does away with the friction between the elective municipal chief executive and the council, and enables the people to fix responsibility for many anomalies in the administration." Since this plan had been successful in the United States, Laurel was convinced it was "worth our while to give it a trial."<sup>35</sup>

During the Spanish period one cause of "dissatisfaction of the Filipinos against Spanish rule was the denial. . . of the right to participate in the administration of their own affairs."<sup>36</sup> But this "old traditional concept of government. . . that it was something remote, powerful, superior, entitled to one's unquestioning obedience" is now being replaced by the genuine and dynamic concept of government: that it "is and should be actually only an instrument for the carrying of their [the people's] ideals and desires."<sup>37</sup> Laurel talked of the proportional relationship between an unresponsive government and the people's dissidence:

. . . whenever the government becomes too ineffectual, corrupt, graft-ridden, abusive, unresponsive to the needs of the people, and therefore, unworthy of the citizens' trust and confidence, dissidence proportionately increases in volume and intensity. . . the lower the government sinks in

35. *Ibid.*, p. 184.

36. *PSP*, p. 172.

37. *BF*, p. 88.

corruption and inefficiency the more vigorous and determined will become the dissidence that will challenge its authority.<sup>38</sup>

When the government fails to represent the interests of the people, then the former can disown the latter. "The Declaration of Independence of Philadelphia and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen are glorious monuments to the people's superior right of revolution. . ."<sup>39</sup> But in recent times, while the people have the power in the sense that sovereignty resides in them, "they have not the right to abolish all government or to create anarchy; they have neither the power nor the right to resume or directly administer and execute all the powers of government."<sup>40</sup> In the event that the people, said Laurel, "have the right to change their government, surely there is no reason why they cannot exercise this right in a peaceful and legal way,"<sup>41</sup> i.e., through a constitutional convention, the mission and purpose of which is to do away with the necessity or excuse for revolution.

#### BUILDING A NATION

The great and immediate work of Filipinos is to build a nation.<sup>42</sup> Among the nation-molding forces, viz., geographical unity, ethnical unity, national language, religion, community of national interest, and common tradition, the last one is indispensable. The Greeks prior to the Second World War constituted a distinct nationality despite the absence of geographical unity; no nation anywhere in the world is without racial or ethnical mixture; the Belgians, the Swiss, and other peoples have shown that language alone does not create a nation; the United States history proves that religious diversity does not hinder lasting national unity; though economic policies, as in Denmark and Holland, help create national sentiment, this is possible only in countries where national consciousness is powerful, but not in weaker and developing countries. Therefore it is only the possession of a common imperishable tradition that strengthens the bond of national union.<sup>43</sup>

38. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

39. *PSP*, p. 2.

40. *AN*, p. 144.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

42. *FMNG*, p. 15.

43. *AN*, pp. 31-34.

Once a nation is built there is the further task of making that nation great. Elsewhere, Laurel maintained that a nation must nurture the seeds of moral discipline from within itself: "History teaches that the rise and fall of nations depends essentially upon the underlying moral strength of their citizens."<sup>44</sup> Racial pride must be cultivated and this goes with the fact that the Orient is the cradle of human civilization. The moral and spiritual forces that a nation — in order to grow strong and progressive — must nurture from within are: citizen obligations; patriotism; filial piety; veneration of heroes; obedience to law and authority; honor; modesty, frugality, and cleanliness; self-reliance and perseverance; hard work; truth; honesty; justice and charity; individual and social discipline; and neighborliness and social responsibility.<sup>45</sup> The preservation of national ideals, unification of culture, and coordination of public instruction with home and civil life of pupils and with local industries and surroundings are geared toward the awakening of a strong sense of national consciousness and solidarity based on a commonly inherited tradition and civilization.

Laurel believed that nationalism, which means "loyalty to the history, institutions, and tradition of our country and [the cherishment of] everything that is genuinely and honorably Filipino," must precede internationalism. As a matter of fact, "internationalism is not possible until nationalism has established itself."<sup>46</sup> This is not to mean that everything foreign is unacceptable. As Laurel put it:

[It is not] that we should reject everything that is not Filipino, but. . . that we should discard that false concept that everything foreign must be good and, therefore, should be imitated. We must use discrimination and prudence in adopting foreign models. If we have to follow foreign patterns, let us blend them with our own customs, traditions and ideals, but first purifying them of whatever grossness or imperfection they may have.<sup>47</sup>

The recognition of our subservience to American ideas will help us in formulating our economic policies. We must bear in mind that the economic interests of the colony and the mother country

44. *FMNG*, p. 8.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-60. See also *MEO*, pp. 42-43; *AN*, pp. 1-9; and *CMC*, *passim*.

46. *AN*, pp. 39-40.

47. *FMNG*, p. 22; *AN*, p. 64.

cease to be identical when the former becomes independent, and the latter — however altruistic she may pretend to be — “will not sacrifice her own interests whenever these come into conflict with the former colony’s interests.”<sup>48</sup> The persistence of a former colony in seeking advice and guidance in framing its economic policies from the former mother country is therefore misplaced, for the latter will rather advance and protect her own interests than sacrifice them for the sake of the social and economic progress of the former colony.

Foreign policy is “nothing more than an outward projection of what the nation is at home in the first place,” in terms of what the people need, what they are capable of doing, and what they expect to accomplish. A sound foreign policy must take into consideration the following five imperatives: (1) the people must be true and loyal to their history, their nationalism, and their homeland; (2) they must be ready to defend their independence; (3) colonial structures and scaffoldings in the national economy must be demolished so that the nation can reconstruct its economy to suit its own needs; (4) rights and privileges granted to citizens of foreign countries must have full reciprocal rights and privileges granted by their country to our citizens; and (5) there must be the “assertion of ample freedom in the exercise of moral judgment in international agreements or conventions.”<sup>49</sup>

#### LAUREL THE MAN<sup>50</sup>

Born on 9 March 1891 in Tanauan, Batangas, Jose Paciano Laurel spent his childhood swimming in the Tanauan river and the Taal lake, hiking in the woods, and playing on a guitar or a violin. The death of his father, Sotero, in 1902 as a victim of the concentration camp established by General Bell in Batangas, Cavite, and Laguna, left the responsibility of bringing up the children to his mother, Jacoba.

As a boy there was nothing remarkable in Laurel. He cared little for books. Though his primary teachers unanimously considered

48. *TO*, pp. 13-14.

49. *BF*, pp. 65-68.

50. The biographical sketch from Laurel’s birth until his trial before the People’s Court is based largely on Teofilo and Jose del Castillo, *SJL* (Manila and Delaware: Associated Author’s Company, 1949).

him hopeless, he loved music very much, which prompted him to join a local orchestra. When he studied at the College of San Juan de Letran in Manila, he failed at least one subject.

The turning point of Laurel's intellectual career came about when he realized that despite the financial loss and the disappointment his failure had caused his mother, she still treated him with kindness. Reflecting on the situation, Laurel arrived at the conclusion that his failure in some subjects was due largely to his irregular class attendance brought about by his scheduled engagements with a Batangas orchestra. His failure and the thought of homeland gossip deeply bothered him.

He had a crush on a town belle and decided to drop the orchestra. After getting a job in a convent as an acolyte and a chorister, Laurel enrolled in the Manila High School. In 1909 he gave up the convent job for a position in the Bureau of Forestry which paid him ₱.40 a day. Still thinking of that Tanauan belle, Laurel studied hard and received high grades. That Christmas vacation he went home only to find his crush entertaining a new suitor. In his inexperience he ignored the suitor, went up and kissed her.<sup>51</sup> This ended with threats which the suitor swore he would carry out on Laurel.

A fracas involving knives occurred one evening between the two boys. Laurel received a cut on the head and in defense of his life stabbed his assailant with his balisong. The assailant, seriously wounded, was rushed to the hospital while Laurel, who received a lighter wound, was imprisoned. In the hearing that followed, the court of first instance, which found Laurel guilty of the charge of assault and battery and frustrated murder, sentenced him to fourteen years imprisonment at the Bilibid prison. Since Laurel was a minor and had merely defended his life, the defense counsel appealed the case to the Supreme Court which fortunately upheld Laurel's contention that he fought merely in self-defense and set him free.

Laurel graduated from the Manila High School in 1911 as an honor student. Having eloped with Paciencia Hidalgo (a different Tanauan girl) in 1912, Laurel decided to enroll in the College of

51. Rose Laurel Avanceña and Ileana Maramag reported in *DC* (n.p.: Rose Avanceña and Ileana Maramag, 1980), p. 54, that Laurel's gangmates dared him to steal a kiss from one of the town's belles.

Law of the University of the Philippines. He looked for another job and found one in the office of the code committee. He worked under Atty. Thomas Atkins Street who was engaged in codifying the internal revenue laws and the administrative code. Since he needed an accurate command of Spanish for this job, Laurel enrolled at the Escuela de Derecho.

He obtained the degree of Bachelor of Laws from the University of the Philippines in 1915. Instead of practicing law he took a job at Malacañang, then the official residence of the governor general, in the office of the law division of the executive. In 1918 he obtained the degree of Doctor of Jurisprudence from the Escuela de Derecho;<sup>52</sup> by then he had advanced in the law division to the position of acting chief.

He became a government pensionado in the same year and left for the United States to enroll at Yale University, where he later joined the staff of the *Yale Law Review*. In 1920 Yale conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Civil Laws. Before coming home, Laurel visited Washington, D.C., where he became a member of the District of Columbia Bar and was admitted to practice law before the US Supreme Court. He also visited the Sorbonne and Oxford.

#### RESIGNATION FROM APPOINTED POST

On his return home he was appointed chief of the executive bureau. In 1922 he became the undersecretary of the interior and ten months later became a full secretary. But Laurel resigned from his job when the governor general interfered with his affairs on so petty a matter as the reinstatement of Sergeant Ray Conley (a detective suspended for being connected with vice lords). Conley was tried and though acquitted by the court, was under an on-going investigation by a board that Governor General Wood created through the request of Laurel, who was disappointed with the court decision. After the acceptance of his resignation Laurel, who was convinced of Conley's guilt, practiced law, taught in some law colleges in Manila, and wrote articles and books. He ran for senator in 1925 and won. He lost, however, in the 1931 senatorial elec-

52. Manuel E. Buenafe, *WP* (Manila: Philippine Education Foundation, Inc., 1950), p. 212, thought it was a master of laws degree; Avanceña and Maramag, *DC*, p. 55, are silent about this.

tions to Claro M. Recto. So he went back to teaching and the practice of law. During this time he made a number of public speeches, wrote a number of articles, and delivered his class lectures superbly.

In 1934 Laurel was elected a delegate to the constitutional convention. Though Recto was elected chairman of the convention, Laurel was elected chairman of the committee on the bill of rights. The following year the University of the Philippines selected Laurel as the most distinguished alumnus and the University of Santo Tomas conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Philosophy. In 1935 Manuel L. Quezon appointed him to a seat in the Supreme Court bench and in 1938 the Tokyo Imperial University conferred upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.<sup>53</sup>

In 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. With the Japanese forces advancing to Manila from Aparri and Vigan in the north and from Legaspi in the South, General Mac-Arthur, through Lieutenant Colonel Huff, instructed President Quezon on 20 December 1941 to be ready to evacuate to Corregidor. Originally Quezon wanted Laurel to go with him in order to help him prepare the papers and documents there, but on 23 December Quezon changed his mind. In the words of Buenafe, Quezon ordered Laurel "to stay behind because of his Japanese connections which it was hoped, and rightly, might serve the country in good stead."<sup>54</sup> Quezon appointed Laurel Secretary of Justice, and acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; he also instructed him "to help Mr. Vargas," who had been appointed mayor of greater Manila. To Laurel's argument that the Japanese might require or compel those who remain to do many things which might be inimical to the government and therefore it might be reasonable at least for him to go to the mountains, Quezon replied after consulting MacArthur that Laurel should do what the Japanese asked him to do except one thing — to take an oath of allegiance to Japan.

Jorge Vargas became the chairman of the executive commission and the high command of the Japanese Army selected Laurel as

53. Theodore Friend, *BTE* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1969), p. 37. See also *WP*, p. 214, and *DC*, p. 63.

54. *WP*, p. 210. In 1935 the Japanese consulate hired Laurel to work for the solution of the Davao problem in view of the Rodriguez' policy to cancel all illegal Japanese leases and prevent further illegal leasing. See *BTE*, pp. 179-80, and also *DC*, pp. 84-85 and 95.

Commissioner of Justice. The interference of the Japanese military in court affairs prompted Laurel to issue a circular prohibiting dismissal of cases pending trial or investigation except in due course of legal procedure. This led to his detention at Fort Santiago for three hours. When Benigno Aquino, Sr., then Commissioner of the Interior, was made the Vice President and Director-General of the Kapisanan Sa Paglilingkod Sa Bagong Pilipinas (KALIBAPI), Laurel was removed from the Department of Justice and appointed Commissioner of the Interior by the Japanese High Command.

While playing golf at the Wack Wack Country Club in Mandalayong on 5 June 1943, Laurel was shot from behind. While still confined in the Philippine General Hospital, he was chosen chairman of the preparatory commission for Philippine Independence in June 1943. Working feverishly on the constitution, the preparatory commission had it ratified by the general assembly composed of 117 KALIBAPI members on 7 September 1943. Eighteen days later, Laurel was unanimously elected President of the Republic by the assembly delegates.

While in Tokyo, upon the invitation of the Japanese government, Laurel was requested to declare war against Great Britain and the United States. But Laurel politely refused, saying that the Filipino people would not approve of it, that he could not carry out the order, and that he himself had never been a popular leader.<sup>55</sup> Back home on 14 October 1943 Laurel took his oath of office before Chief Justice Jose Yulo and that same day the Republic was made to sign a pact of political, economic, and military alliance with Japan.

#### NATIONAL SURVIVAL

The ideological policy of the Laurel government was national survival. So Laurel tried his best in cushioning the impact of the devastation and suffering. When the tide of war shifted in favor of the allied forces in 1944, Laurel and his cabinet, after a thorough discussion of alternatives, decided on compliance with Japan's request for a declaration of war to declare formally that a state of war existed between the Republic of the Philippines and the United States and Great Britain. On 26 September Laurel ex-

55. *WM*, p. 17.

plained this particular declaration in a radio broadcast and mentioned his previous announcement "to render every aid and assistance to the Imperial Japanese Government, short of conscription of Filipino manhood for active military service."<sup>56</sup> Ambassador Murata insinuated to Laurel in one of his visits that there should be conscription since the Republic had declared war against the United States and Great Britain. Laurel explained he simply made a statement of fact that there existed a state of war between the Philippines and the United States and Great Britain, but he had not declared war.

In November 1944 General Yamashita told Laurel to get ready to move the seat of government to Baguio. While in Baguio Murata informed Laurel that the Supreme War Council in Japan wanted him and the leading members of his cabinet to go to Japan as soon as possible. On 22 March 1945 Laurel and party left Baguio and reached Tuguegarao seven days later. The next day they arrived at Formosa and landed in Japan in three batches, the last one around the second week of June.

On 14 September 1945, after the surrender of Japan, Laurel and Aquino sent MacArthur a wire informing him that they wanted to place themselves at his disposal. Lt. Col. Turner and his men arrived that afternoon to arrest them. On 15 September they were taken to Yokohama prison. It was apparent to Laurel that the charge against them would be treasonable collaboration with Japan. To explain his side, he wrote his war memoirs on the pages of Birkenhead's book, *The World in 2030 A.D.* He also wrote here the basic tenets of his moral and political philosophy. Laurel and his colleagues were later transferred to Sugamo prison where Laurel continued writing his memoirs and some philosophical ideas.

In July 1946 the political prisoners were handed over to the Philippine government and on 2 September they were taken to the People's Court to face trial. What Laurel fought for at the early stage of the trial was a grant for bail since he needed his freedom to locate and gather the documents that would prove him innocent. He was released on bail that same month. He worked for an indefinite postponement of his trial on 27 December 1946. Towards the end of May 1947 he was nominated for the Philippine

56. *Tribune*, 27 September 1944.

senate and by mid-October, "exactly four years after the Laurel republic was inaugurated, one of the first balloons went up suggesting him for the presidency in 1949."<sup>57</sup> Laurel's trial was reopened several days later, but on 28 January 1948, President Roxas issued a proclamation granting amnesty to all collaborators.

In 1949 Dr. Laurel decided to run for president under the Nacionalista ticket against Vice-President Elpidio Quirino, but lost. The Nacionalistas were nevertheless convinced that Laurel "had obtained the requisite plurality of votes, although the one proclaimed elected was his opponent."<sup>58</sup> Due to lack of organization and logistics and due to poll irregularities, the Nacionalista Party seriously considered putting up no candidates in the 1951 elections, but Laurel urged his colleagues to try once more and true to his insistence, the Nacionalistas swept the 1951 elections with Laurel topping the senatorial slate. In 1952 he founded the Lyceum of the Philippines and became its first president. The following year when he was about to get even with his 1949 opponent, Laurel willingly gave way to Ramon Magsaysay, who it was believed could avoid the repetition of the 1949 irregularities, and launched the latter's candidacy. Magsaysay, who became President of the Republic, sent Laurel to the US to discuss the revision of the 1946 Trade Agreement. Upon the insistence of his family that he withdraw from the 1957 presidential race, Laurel retired from public life in December 1957.<sup>59</sup> He died in Mandaluyong on 6 November 1959 at the age of sixty-eight.

#### LAUREL THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHER AND LAUREL THE MAN

The issue of living out one's philosophy belongs to ethics proper, but since part of ethical behavior is closely linked with political behavior in the sense that traditional political philosophy incorporates within its domain certain ethical ideas — as in Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, *et al.* — this demand to live out one's philosophy is certainly fitting in our discussion of Laurel as a political

57. David Joel Steinberg, *PCW* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967), p. 160.

58. Roberto Concepcion, "Politics and the Law Professor," *Sunday Times Magazine*, 20 November 1966, reprinted in *JPLS*, p. 157.

59. *DC*, p. 357.

philosopher. Had Laurel been a logician and not a political thinker, perhaps there would be no point in raising this existential issue.

It is quite obvious in the preceding two sections that the discussions concerning the life and political ideas of Laurel are historically rather extensive, i.e., they are not limited to a particular historical period. My reason for stressing this is that the Laurel of the Japanese period — the focus of this section — can best be understood in terms of a holistic treatment of Laurel's political views in his entire life. The ground for this is the fact that except for those ideas on foreign policy and policy formulation, all the rest had been expressed in his pre-war and wartime *Assertive Nationalism*, *Politico-Social Problems*, *Forces that Make a Nation Great*, *War Memoirs*, and *Moral and Political Orientation*. The last two books, though published in 1962 and 1949, respectively, were written in 1945 at the Yokohama and Sugamo prisons and it is very probable Laurel had these political ideas — some of which had already been said in the first three books above — before or during the Japanese period and committed them into writing only later. The postwar political ideas were generally elaborations of earlier ideas.

Did Laurel live out his political philosophy, or to put it differently, did he apply his political views during the Japanese occupation? The answer would seem to be a qualified yes. A corollary question is whether Laurel believed in what he said in his speeches and radio broadcasts during those fateful years? Again the answer would be in general, yes.

Political ideas are anchored generally on deeply felt convictions and values that develop out of one's training and experience: the ups and downs and the gradual realization that all is not well in this world. Such have been the cases of Plato, Augustine, More, Marx, and others. They believed that what politically existed could still be improved. Laurel's case is no exception: for example, the values of fairness or justice (due process of law) and righteousness became part of his convictions during the whole episode when he was imprisoned and tried in court for frustrated murder, and these values greatly influenced the development of his political philosophy. Before the war he had occasions to apply his political convictions when he was the Secretary of the Interior in 1922, a senator in 1925, and a constitutional convention delegate in 1934.

Righteousness, according to Laurel, is the moral basis of good government. Righteousness implies devotion to truth, justice, goodness, fortitude, benevolence, and courage.<sup>60</sup> Laurel's resignation as Secretary of the Interior on the basis of his sincere belief that Sgt. Conley was dishonest and that the governor general should not have interfered with the administrative investigation is to me a clear expression of his sense of righteousness. As a senator he fought in the legislature for certain ideas — unpopular at the time — which he believed the government must implement in order to be responsive to the welfare of the people.<sup>61</sup> first, he wanted the old inheritance law amended so that the wife of a childless couple would inherit the wealth of the couple when the husband dies, instead of this wealth going to relatives; second, he fought for women suffrage, believing that women are important partners of men in building the nation;<sup>62</sup> and third, he insisted that properties of religious corporations be taxed.

Laurel felt that elections must be honest and clean. Convinced of the cleanness of the 1931 senatorial election in his district, Laurel was one of the first to congratulate his opponent, Claro M. Recto, and the two became fast friends. Recto, according to the Castillos, "stood by as chief counsel" in Laurel's defense against the indictment for treason that Laurel allegedly committed during the occupation. Laurel's act of congratulating Recto seems to be a glowing affirmation of the former's belief that the greatness of a nation depends very much on the moral quality of the people. If the election was clean, it was incumbent on Laurel to go with the wishes of the people and thereby congratulate Recto.

#### LAUREL ON HUMAN RIGHTS

As a firm believer of individual rights he fought for these rights when he was a senator and later a trial lawyer. And it is evidently for this reason he was chosen the chairman of the committee on the bill of rights of the constitutional convention.<sup>63</sup> As Laurel

60. *MPO*, p. 28.

61. *SJL*, pp. 82-84.

62. *PSP*, p. 174.

63. *SJL*, pp. 92-93.

said, "There is no constitution, worthy of the name, without a bill or declaration of rights."<sup>64</sup>

After the war, Laurel also had occasions to apply some of his political ideas. His beliefs in individual rights and due process of law (justice) were clear when he fought for his being granted bail before the People's Court. Said he:

[I wanted to be given] all available opportunity to assemble and put in shape the evidence, to locate and search for papers and documents which have been confiscated by the Americans and Filipinos at my house, which I cannot very well do while confined in jail.<sup>65</sup>

Had Laurel won the 1949 presidential election he could have fully applied all of his political and legal philosophy. His political conviction that a democratic government can survive only if there are at least two political parties competing with each other came to the fore when he insistently urged his party colleagues, who were discouraged with regard to the 1949 poll irregularities, to try again in 1951.<sup>66</sup> In 1953 when his partymen pressured him to withdraw his commitment from Magsaysay and run instead for the presidency, Dr. Laurel, who knew that if the acts of violence and terrorism of 1949 were to be repeated in 1953, "then blood would flow freely over the land," could not bear to see "how a naked desire to vindicate himself or the temptation of the presidency could be a cause for so much bloodshed and agony for his people." He told his partymen: "All the privileges and the high prerogatives of the chief magistracy of this Republic cannot be any higher than the word of honor of Jose P. Laurel, the man. Gentlemen, my commitment stands. My word is final."<sup>67</sup>

One of Laurel's important political accomplishments was the Laurel-Langley Agreement which incorporates his idea that the Philippines must not grant rights and privileges to citizens of foreign countries unless full reciprocal rights and privileges were likewise granted by them to the Philippines. Laurel was simply

64. *PSP*, p. 81.

65. *SJL*, p. 14.

66. Gil J. Puyat, "He Saved Our 2-Party System," speech delivered on the Senate floor, 9 March 1967, published in *JPLS*, p. 173. See also *AN*, p. 119.

67. Felixberto Serrano, "Honor Above Powers of Presidency," speech delivered before the Escolta Walking Corporation, 9 March 1965, published in *JPLS*, p. 199.

being consistent with his political beliefs when this idea appeared in the Laurel-Langley Trade Agreement.<sup>68</sup>

During the Japanese occupation, Laurel would have preferred being a guerilla in the mountains to working under the Japanese but because Quezon instructed him to help Vargas in running the government under the Japanese umbrella, short of taking an oath of allegiance to Japan, he stayed. The instruction meant, to Laurel, that he was permitted to cooperate with Japan only insofar as he – and others like him – could cushion or minimize the impact of hunger and atrocities on the people. Before the war, he believed that the goal of the whole political efforts of the Filipinos must be independence.<sup>69</sup> Now it seemed to him the goal would be survival.<sup>70</sup>

The Japanese occupation was an abnormality, a historical aberration, where morality and philosophies could be suspended in mid-air to be picked up again after the war. But the role that Laurel played during that period had given him opportunities to apply some of his ideas even in a very limited and circumscribed way. Laurel consistently held that the history of the world is “the history of man and his arduous struggle for liberty,”<sup>71</sup> since to him the Filipino people during this period were struggling for emancipation from Japanese clutches. This struggle, however, was possible only when the people could survive famine and diseases. Thus survival in this epoch was more essential than emancipation.

#### INTERROGATION AT FORT SANTIAGO

As the Commissioner of Justice, Laurel resented the interference of the Japanese in the same way as he resented the interference of Gov.-Gen. Wood when he was the Secretary of the Interior. This commitment to due process of law, to a just and

68. One may disagree with Laurel on mutual parity rights in that Filipino entrepreneurs lack surplus capital so that while Americans, who have vast capital, can exploit Philippine natural resources freely, the Filipinos cannot equally do the same in America. See in this connection Renato Constantino, *PCP* (Quezon City: The Foundation for Nationalist Studies, 1978), pp. 291-92. What appears therefore to be fair and just on paper is not the case in practice. But this disagreement does not nullify the consistency of Laurel, the man, with his ideas.

69. *AN*, p. 65.

70. *WM*, p. 21. See *DC*, p. 147.

71. *PSP*, p. 53.

fair trial, was paramount in his mind when he issued a circular prohibiting spurious dismissal of cases. This circular unfortunately cost him three hours of intensive interrogation at Fort Santiago. Laurel certainly valued the lives and welfare of others when he, together with Aquino, interceded on behalf of Jose Abad Santos and Manuel Roxas, who were captured by the Japanese in the south. The former, however, was shot while the latter was simply imprisoned. Laurel offered himself to General Sizuiti Tanaka as the guarantor of Manuel Roxas and accepted full responsibility to keep Roxas under his personal custody. This kind of dealing with the Japanese military was used by Laurel many times, "even for Filipinos who were strangers to him. . . for he never turned down an entreaty for his assistance. . ." <sup>72</sup>

Early in the war Laurel already exerted "efforts to alleviate the sufferings of [his] brethren who are too sick or wounded or in exhausted condition in the prison camp as a result of the vicissitudes of war." He discussed the release of war prisoners with General Homma by suggesting the Bushido spirit of *Bushi no sake* – "the victor's act of mercy to his vanquished foe." <sup>73</sup> So on 1 July 1942 1,086 prisoners were released and others on certain subsequent dates.

This concern for the welfare of the people he continued to manifest as the Commissioner of the Interior. He had extricated hundreds of Filipinos from the clutches of the kempei-tai. Among them were Eulogio Rodriguez, Sr., Eulogio Rodriguez, Jr., Col. Jose P. Guido, Col. Ireneo Buenconsejo, Sabino de Leon, Ponciano Bernardo, Tomas Morato, Elpidio Quirino, Antonio Quirino, J. B. L. Reyes, Emilio de la Paz, Constancio Leuterio, Judge Simeon Ramos, Dr. Sixto Antonio, and Jose C. Zulueta. <sup>74</sup>

His attitude towards his assassin was one of understanding rather than of hatred and vengeance. He knew Little Joe but instead of identifying him to the Japanese, he told them he had no idea who the assassin was. <sup>75</sup>

72. *SJL*, p. 185.

73. *Ibid.*, pp. 167-68.

74. *Ibid.*, p. 184. See Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *FY* (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Company, 1965), 1:380.

75. His real name is Feliciano Lizardo. See Limneo L. Platon, "The Lizardo/Medrano Affair," *VJPL*, Part I (6 November 1978), p. 4.

The constitution that was to serve as the framework of the republic Laurel envisioned to be temporary, but it was, he believed, to be founded on the three-fold spirit of love of country, co-existence and co-prosperity, and adherence to ethical and moral principles inside and outside the country. He reiterated what he said before the war that the supreme purpose of government is the welfare of the people,<sup>76</sup> and that the reason of independence comes not from the constitution itself but from the united support of the people: "Even a constitution written in the blood of martyrs shed on the battlefields and scaffold will fail if they do not have popular support."<sup>77</sup>

#### EXIGENCIES OF WARTIME GOVERNMENT

The pre-war political philosophy of Laurel had to be tailored to the exigencies of an aberrant situation. His political policies were to preserve the territorial integrity of the country as a member of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere, to respect Filipino idiosyncracies and customs, to maintain Philippine independence, and to enable the Filipino to realize the noble aims of co-prosperity. His economic policy was to increase production and attain self-sufficiency. His educational and cultural policy was to instill in the minds of the people the idea that they were Orientals and should act and think as such.<sup>78</sup> All these ideas, except co-prosperity, were Laurel's pre-war ideas.<sup>79</sup>

As President of the Republic Laurel went on trying to soften the impact of Japanese actions. He saw to it that the Pact of Alliance between the republic and Japan would not entail a declaration of war against any nation: the military aspect of the pact was defensive in nature.<sup>80</sup>

76. *SJL*, p. 211. See *FY*, 1:380.

77. *Tribune*, 8 September 1943. See also *CMC*, p. 23.

78. *Tribune*, 29 September 1943.

79. The notion "co-prosperity" came from the Japanese; therefore to accept this as a rider in his policies was simply in Laurel's words giving to "them what they already had" (*SJL*, p. 191). The notion "Asia for the Asiatics" may have indeed been conceived years before by Laurel (see *DC*, p. 44), but apparently not exactly in the same sense as Japan's co-prosperity sphere. That Filipinos should be proud to be Orientals had been already suggested in "The Sophistication of Christ in the Orient," *AN*, pp. 1-9, and the Filipino struggle for independence (*AN*, p. 65) implied that once independence was secured it should be maintained.

80. *Tribune*, 21 October 1943.

Laurel knew that the republic was a sham,<sup>81</sup> but he had to act in line with the purpose — which was to work for the welfare of the people — inherent in the instruction of Quezon. So that even if he knew the Japanese were not sincere in granting independence to the Filipinos, Laurel had to act in accordance with the constitution whose preamble expressly mentioned the promotion of the general welfare and the securing for the people of the “blessings of independence under a regime of justice, liberty and democracy.”<sup>82</sup> So in October 1943 Laurel issued a proclamation granting general amnesty to persons engaged in seditious and guerilla activities, in illicit associations, in spreading false rumors, etc.<sup>83</sup> He also went on protecting the people against the kempeitai.<sup>84</sup> Agoncillo commented that Laurel throughout his life “thought and acted on the principle that no man could be better than the Filipinos insofar as promoting the welfare of the Philippines was concerned.”<sup>85</sup>

The honor of his country guided Laurel in his political decisions. National pride was coupled with racial pride. When he resigned as Secretary of the Interior, he told Gov.-Gen. Wood why he could not continue serving in the latter’s administration: “The honor of my country, as well as my own, does not permit me.”<sup>86</sup> This honor was also his guiding reason for resenting the presence of Kihara Hideico as his adviser in Malacañang and for his resenting the sagacious persistence of the kempeitai to arrest the men under his custody. It was said that Laurel was prepared to shoot it out with the kempeitai if they had tried to arrest Major Jesus Vargas or Manuel Roxas.<sup>87</sup>

On the social and economic side, Laurel did his best to minimize the problems of hunger and diseases. Agoncillo wrote:

81. Emilio Abello, “Laurel and the Rule of Law,” lecture delivered on 8 March 1968 in the Hall of Freedom, Lyceum of the Philippines. Published in *JPLS*, p. 137.

82. *SJL*, p. 213.

83. *Official Gazette*, vol. 1, no. 1, 14-31 October 1943, p. 6.

84. Ferdinand E. Marcos said that Laurel, through his military aide, warned him in 1943 of his impending arrest and had given him the opportunity to escape. See “Jose P. Laurel, Man and Scholar,” *Manila Chronicle*, 12-13 March 1964. Reprinted in *JPLS*, pp. 165-66. See also Hartzell Spence, *MP* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1969), p. 177.

85. *FY*, 1:405. See *DC*, p. 132.

86. *FY*, 1:406.

87. *SJL*, pp. 261-67. See *FY*, 1:400-2.

Foodstuffs were becoming scarce, and the people had to content themselves with substitutes for rice — camotes (sweet potatoes), cassava flour, roasted coconut meat, etc. Laurel, touched by want and suffering as men, women, and children picked up one by one the grains of rice on the streets falling from leaking sacks loaded on trucks, introduced the community kitchen operated directly under the President, through the Food Administration, so that the poor and the needy could have even minimum food. *No man under the circumstances could have done better.*<sup>88</sup>

If the occupation were a normal situation, then our criteria of appraisal for the success of Laurel's government would have been stricter. But as Buenafe remarked, there always loomed the phrase "*under the circumstances.*"<sup>89</sup>

Deceit and pretense — two attitudes ordinarily condemned under normal conditions — became tools of national survival in a rather freak environment. Laurel made use of them several times, but most importantly in pledging to the Japanese the total resources of the nation for their war efforts, and in declaring the existence of a state of war between the Philippines and the United States and Great Britain. Laurel explained his pledge thus: "The Japanese had everything — houses, cars, food, furniture, tools. And when I pledged to them the total resources of the nation for their war efforts, I gave them what they already had."<sup>90</sup> The Japanese, except the kempei-tai, got the impression that Laurel was on their side and this led some guerilla groups, who interpreted the pledge as a sanction of Japanese deeds, to decide to liquidate him.<sup>91</sup> But that was what Laurel could do in the situation. As regards the "declaration of a state of war" (a confirmation of an existing state of affairs), it was an utter disappointment on the part of Ambassador Murata and the Japanese imperial government upon learning that there would be no conscription because there was no "declaration of war" (a statement that an independent country is going to war). To Laurel the preservation of the nation's manhood against so much death, suffering, and destruction was paramount: hence the absence of conscription.

Laurel never wanted to go to Japan in 1945 but there was

88. *FY*, 1:405. Italics mine.

89. *WP*, p. 232. See *DC*, p. 13.

90. *SJL*, p. 191.

91. Colonel "Yay" (Yay Marking), *M* (Pasig: Venceremos Enterprises, 1979), p. 190.

nothing he could do, short of death.<sup>92</sup> The Supreme War Council of Japan wanted to keep his government in exile for political reasons, but when the surrender of Japan became apparent, Laurel dissolved his government on 17 August 1945.<sup>93</sup>

#### LAUREL'S WARTIME SPEECHES

Laurel made at least four public speeches prior to taking his oath as President of the Republic. He delivered on 8 February 1943 an address at the Luneta on the occasion of the celebration of the reaffirmation by Premier Hideki Tozyo of the promise to grant independence to the Philippines at the earliest possible time; he made the opening remarks on 6 May 1943 at the new Luneta on the occasion of the visit of Premier Tozyo in Manila; he delivered an extemporaneous speech on 7 September 1943 as chairman of the preparatory commission for Philippine independence before the special general assembly of the KALIBAPI; and he also delivered a speech of acceptance as President of the Republic on 25 September 1943 before the national assembly.<sup>94</sup> In all these Laurel emphasized the themes of love of freedom and independence; the divine character of the right to freedom; the republican spirit of the constitution; the reality of independence largely dependent upon the Filipinos themselves; one nation, one heart, one republic; and concern for the people's welfare. These are pre-war political ideas. As regards the purpose of the republic, Laurel told the national assembly:

We may. . .differ in our views, but we cannot disagree in one thing, we cannot be divided in one thing, we cannot stray from the trodden path blazed before us by our ancestors – we must serve our people loyally and faithfully. . . .we must have our people's welfare at heart; we must build our country and reconstruct it in the midst of the misery and devastation wrought by the war; we must safeguard our people, feed, clothe, and shelter them: we must do anything and everything in our power to relieve their sufferings. . . . We must be determined to serve our people to the bitter end, giving them, if necessary, the last drop of our blood so that they may be happy and contented.<sup>95</sup>

92. *SJL*, p. 357; *DC*, p. 158.

93. *FY*, 2:882.

94. *Official Journal*, 10:ix-x; 12:xxi-xxii; 13:xxxxi-lxii.

95. *Ibid.*, 13:xxxiv-xxxv.

The warm allusions to Nippon in *Forces that Make a Nation Great*, which Teofilo and Jose del Castillo considered as "improvements" by the Japanese editors of the *Manila Daily Tribune*, were not entirely objectionable.<sup>96</sup> Those in the application and comparative part, "Forces that Made Japan Great," were empirically verifiable and were consistent as a whole with the first part, "The Moral and Spiritual Forces that Must Be Nurtured from Within." What is interesting here is that the first three chapters ("The Orient, the Cradle of Civilization," "Racial Pride," and "The Value of Ethical Principles") of which the succeeding chapters are just "enumeration and illustration," are all pre-war conceptions.<sup>97</sup> His speeches, radio broadcasts, and proclamations as President of the Republic were in line with the acceptance speech he delivered before the national assembly on 25 September 1943.

#### CONCLUSION

This article was not intended to be an apologetic for Laurel's performance during the occupation but the deeper one studies him and his ideas, the more the consistency of his actions with his thought emerges. Even during the occupation he did not compromise his basic political ideas but merely tailored them to the exigencies of the period. Pragmatism was the call of the time, so Laurel made tributes, whenever appropriate, to certain Japanese characteristic traits, which if it were not because they were said during the occupation, could have been totally unobjectionable. The traits of Japanese industriousness, strong family ties, compulsory education, etc.,<sup>98</sup> e.g., are verifiably true even at present, but they were said at a time when they could be construed as a glorification of the Japanese race.

Laurel's ideas, though coherent, are not written altogether in one piece. One has to gather them here and there, from left and right, and then classify them according to the categories set by the classifier. But when Laurel indicated in his origin of government that Rousseau's Arcadian bliss and innocence, and Hobbes's

96. *SJL*, pp. 193-94.

97. *FMNG*, p. 3. See *AN*, pp. 1-9, 31-43, 51-59, and 61-72; *PSP*, pp. 11-15, 35-52, and 193-216. See also *SJL*, p. 193.

98. *FMNG*, pp. 63-122.

state of nature where each one is at war with everyone, would after all end up with a creation of a government for fear of solitude,<sup>99</sup> he unfortunately faltered because for both Hobbes and Rousseau people decide to form a government for the reason of self-preservation. Laurel is surely not original in the sense that his "fear of solitude" was borrowed — as he himself said — from Spinoza, and his concept of man as gregarious can be found in Aristotle; but he did base his thinking on modern theories of society, for example, when he invoked sociologists as regards the gregariousness of man.

The formation of government in modern societies, it seems, is situational, i.e., depending on the needs of the times. The Japanese-sponsored Philippine Republic — a government in duress<sup>100</sup> — was formed not out of the people's fear of solitude, but, as Laurel himself cogently said, out of the people's desire to survive. This is more in keeping with Hobbes's theory on self-preservation.

Not in all instances did Laurel have a chance to apply his political beliefs during the occupation (that is the reason for the qualified affirmative answer in the previous section) simply because many of them were not needed in order for the nation and the people to survive. For example, Laurel could not apply his theories on local government, especially the city manager plan, because the Japanese occupation was temporary and survival was more important than his ideas on local government, which would work better in peacetime than in wartime. Moreover, in time of crisis Laurel always believed in a strong executive rather than in the autonomy of local governments. Despite adversities Laurel tried, not with perfect success, to maintain law and order since these to him were the foundation stone of stable governmental structures.

As stated in the preceding section, Laurel believed in what he said during the Japanese period, because the basic political ideas in his speeches and broadcasts were pre-war ideas. But this was qualified by the phrase "in general," since Laurel by necessity had to accommodate — perhaps against his will — certain necessary allusions to Japan. One instance (though there are many) can be

99. *PSP*, p. 1.

100. See Laurel's idea of duress, *SJL*, pp. 20-21. See also *DC*, pp. 22-23, 25, 31, 33, 41, and 89.

cited from his speech entitled "One Nation, One Heart, One Republic."

This flag (indicating the Japanese flag) is a great flag. *It is a flag that should be venerated by all Filipinos since it symbolizes the unselfish attempt of a great oriental people to liberate not only the Filipinos but all the other peoples of East Asia.* But, much as we honor that flag, much as we are indebted to the flag of the Rising Sun, my people, you and I, would like to see in this place our own Filipino flag — the flag of the Sun and Stars — which symbolizes all that is good and all that is great in our history as a people.<sup>101</sup>

Granted all the resentment Laurel had for the Japanese, it is difficult to think Laurel sincerely believed in the message contained in the italicized sentence. But in the context of the whole paragraph, the message was harmless enough since the more important message was the replacement of the Japanese flag with the Filipino flag. It seems that Laurel deliberately inserted this sentence in his speech as a diplomatic ploy to soften the effect, in the eyes of the Japanese, of replacing the Japanese flag with the Filipino flag.

Life to Laurel is a divine gift:<sup>102</sup> it must be revered and respected. Suicide is therefore out of the question since it violates the divinity of life — though he entertained it, together with his cabinet men, as an alternative to taking an oath of allegiance to Japan through a declaration of war. Obviously, for Laurel, one can sacrifice his life for love of country: heroism and veneration of heroes were, after all, part of his belief system. But he could not assume the heroic stand of Jose Abad Santos, or be a guerilla in the mountains, if other viable alternatives were open since he had a mission to accomplish — a mission contained in the instruction of Quezon to help Vargas in government for the welfare of the people. It was all the more necessary for him to stay alive, if possible, for he was now in charge of the government as president. There is indeed some truth in what a middle-aged man said: "Laurel was a patriot, a pro-Filipino. No, not all of us could be guerrillas. . . . *Each has his own work to do. . . . Laurel did his. We had ours. . . .*"<sup>103</sup>

101. *Official Journal*, 13:xxxix. Italics mine.

102. *FMNG*, p. 31.

103. *FY*, 1:378. Italics supplied.

## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AN</b>	– <i>Assertive Nationalism</i>
<b>BF</b>	– <i>Bread and Freedom</i>
<b>BTE</b>	– <i>Between Two Empires</i>
<b>CMC</b>	– <i>Commentaries on the Moral Code</i>
<b>DC</b>	– <i>Days of Courage</i>
<b>EWD</b>	– <i>Our Economy – What Can Be Done?</i>
<b>FMNG</b>	– <i>Forces that Make a Nation Great</i>
<b>FY</b>	– <i>The Fateful Years</i>
<b>GT</b>	– <i>Gems of Thought</i>
<b>JPLS</b>	– <i>Jose P. Laurel: Leader for All Seasons</i>
<b>M</b>	– <i>Marking</i>
<b>MEO</b>	– <i>Moral and Educational Orientation for Filipinos</i>
<b>MP</b>	– <i>Marcos of the Philippines</i>
<b>MPO</b>	– <i>Moral and Political Orientation</i>
<b>PCP</b>	– <i>The Philippines: The Continuing Past</i>
<b>PCW</b>	– <i>Philippine Collaboration in World War II</i>
<b>PSP</b>	– <i>Politico-Social Problems</i>
<b>SJL</b>	– <i>The Saga of Jose P. Laurel</i>
<b>TO</b>	– <i>Thinking for Ourselves</i>
<b>VJPL</b>	– <i>Vignettes on JPL</i>
<b>WM</b>	– <i>War Memoirs</i>
<b>WP</b>	– <i>Wartime Philippines</i>