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Hilario Camino Moncado

JOSEPH J. KAVANAGH

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
"PAN IS DEAD! GREAT PAN IS DEAD!
PAN, PAN IS DEAD!
"PAN IS DEAD! GREAT PAN IS DEAD!"

E. B. Browning

ON Sunday, 8 April 1956, Hilario Camino Moncado, at the age of fifty-seven, died of a heart attack while playing golf with some Filipino friends on the Agua Caliente Golf Course in Mexico. His body was brought back to the Philippines, the land of his birth, and interred at the North Cemetery on April 27, attended by hundreds of faithful followers from the colonies he had founded in Lanao, Cebu and Davao.

Thus did newspapers record the death of a man who during life had claimed equality with God.

Mr. Moncado was born on 4 November 1898 in the barrio of Pondol, Balamban, Cebu, son of Gregorio Moncado and Filomena Camino. He left the Philippines as a young man with a group of Filipino emigrants on their way to Hawaii. Life there brought him into close contact with the Filipino laborers in the Hawaiian cane fields and was a remote preparation for his later career as a labor leader. He is said to have spent a

short time in Alaska as well, employed in a salmon-canning factory, before eventually settling on the west coast of the United States where he was to make his home for the greater part of his life.

In subsequent years he laid claim to a long string of academic degrees, including the M.A., LL.B., and LL.D. which he is supposed to have obtained during this early period of his stay in America. Ambitious, energetic and fluently persuasive, he founded the "Filipino Federation of America" in 1925, uniting in one organization the emigrant Filipinos dispersed throughout America and Hawaii. At about the same time he began publication of a fortnightly called *Equifrilibricum*, which was intended to serve as the organ of his Federation, and which became successively *The Filipino Nation* and finally *The Modernist*.

Moncado's activities in the Federation proved lucrative. Eight years after its foundation it had already begun to produce fruit in abundance. The *Philippines Free Press* in its issue of 13 May 1933 carried a story on Moncado, quite uncomplimentary in tone, in which he is depicted as a man capable of hypnotizing "20,000 of his fellow countrymen into parting with one or two hundred thousand pesos a year . . ."

On 15 November 1932 a branch of the Filipino Federation was established in Cebu. It was Moncado's first move in the senatorial campaign he was about to launch against Sergio Osmeña. On 10 June 1933 the *Philippines Free Press* reported that "early next year, the Filipino Federation of America will erect its own concrete building on a 10 hectare piece of land within the limits of this city (Cebu). It will be constructed by the Moncado member-voters at a cost of ₱25,000."

Moncado failed (understandably, considering the calibre of his opponent) in his campaign for a seat in the Senate, but he did succeed in having himself elected delegate to the Constitutional Convention from the Seventh District of Cebu. Not long afterwards he returned to America. He was one of the first Filipinos to cross the Pacific via the then recently inaugurated Clipper service.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War II, Mr. Moncado was again in the Philippines. He remained throughout the period of the Japanese occupation and at war's end was accused of collaboration for having allegedly engaged in "buy and sell" activities and for having displayed the Japanese flag in his home and on his automobile. He was eventually unburdened of the charge through the general amnesty granted by President Roxas.

At the close of the war he organized the "Filipino Crusaders World Army" and appeared constantly thereafter in an army uniform, wearing a "MacArthur-type" cap, and calling himself a five-star general. According to some sources he later elevated himself, doubtless for distinguished service, to the rank of six-star general. In the presidential elections of 1946 Moncado ran for the presidency against Roxas and Osmeña on the "Modernist Party" ticket. His campaign slogan and the principal plank in his party platform was "Vote for Dominion Status for the Philippines."

This plea that the Philippines be made a "Dominion" of the United States, was only one of many manifestations of his ardent admiration for things American. After the failure (again quite understandable) of his bid for the presidency, Moncado returned to the United States. He became a prominent figure in the large Filipino colony at Stockton, California, and for several years sponsored a \$10,000 golf tournament there. His position as head of the Filipino Federation he retained till the time of his death.

Moncado made several attempts to obtain United States citizenship but without success. In 1951 U. S. authorities began deportation proceedings against him and his wife, a former Filipina actress-singer whose stage name was Diana Toy, and he was subsequently ordered to leave U. S. territory before 21 December 1954. In compliance with these orders he transferred his residence to Mexico just south of the border, and it was there that death overtook him suddenly on the golf course at Agua Caliente. At the time of his death, perhaps foreseeing that his efforts to get back into the United States

had little chance of success, he had begun to talk of returning definitely to the Philippines.

Some indication of his projected plans may be gleaned from the *Moncado Mission Bulletin*, a small monthly pamphlet which began publication in 1955, shortly after Moncado had been compelled to leave the United States. The issue for October 1955 carries the ominous notice that Moncado colonies in the Philippines were to be revived. The *Bulletin* states:

The Moncado colony in Dansalan, Lanao, was organized by the late Lorenzo Delos (sic) Reyes, in the latter part of 1932. When he died in 1937, the work was temporarily suspended. The majority of the members were sent to Samal, Davao, to develop Moncado Colony #2. World War came and developments ceased.

A few months ago (mid-year 1955) General Moncado ordered #1 to be reorganized. Under the able leadership of Gregorio Cuenca, the Moncado Colony of Dansalan, Lanao, took its stride toward the realization of its master's dream.

Moncado's megalomania, which spurred him on to such ambitious activity in the fields of labor organization and politics, revealed its most extreme tendencies in what he called his religious mission. He established agricultural colonies in Cebu, Lanao and Davao which became centers of weird religious fanaticism. In these colonies men and women who regard Moncado as a god subject themselves to a most rigorous asceticism, abstaining from all cooked food and meat and sustaining themselves on peanuts, papaya, bananas, and certain types of vegetables. The men cut neither their hair nor their beards and devote themselves with surprising diligence and earnestness to farming. They sell the greater part of what they raise and from the proceeds make substantial contributions to the Moncado organization. What inspires such self-denial is a mystery.

These agricultural colonies however are only one of several types of organizations founded by Moncado. The *Mission Bulletin* mentioned above reveals another. It also provides us with information concerning some of Moncado's more fantastic doctrines and pretensions. The *Bulletin* is a four-page pamphlet published monthly by the Supreme Council of the

EQUI FRILI BRICUM Students, P. O. Box 447, Kaunakakai, Molokai, Hawaii. Recently five issues covering the period July-November 1955 were acquired by the Filipiniana section of the National Library. In the issue for July 1955 we read: (sic)

On December 27th, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of both the Filipino Federation of America and EQUI FRILI BRIUM. Divinely speaking, EQUI FRILI BRIUM is the OWNER of the Filipino Federation of America because he inspired them to organize it. The 30th anniversary of the EQUI FRILI BRIUM . . . corresponds to the age of Jesus Christ when He started His ministry This year EQUI FRILI BRIUM through Moncado and his Mission Bulletin wishes to make himself known to the whole world so he could reach and preach to them the MAN'S MORAL CONCEPT, the new doctrine that "Man and God are Equal"

We take this opportunity to reveal a man whose mission in life is to serve humanity. By birth he is a great politician, statesman, organizer, educator, lawyer, and a great Five-Star General of his own army, the famous Filipino Crusaders World Army. By nature he is a great Philosopher and a great Prophet chosen by the Will of God the Creator, to complete his work which was initiated 2000 years ago by Jesus. . . .

The subject of our proclamation is none other than Five-Star General Hilario Moncado, the human mechanism of EQUI FRILI BRIUM, Christ, in his second advent into this world. As the human mechanism of EQUI FRILI BRIUM, Christ, he enjoyed the life of being the most misunderstood personality in this whole wide world."

Moncado had been propagating what he called "Man's Moral Concept" for more than thirty years at the time of his death. The essence of it is summed up in "man's equality with God" a doctrine which is arrived at by a series of nonsensical statements presented in the form of syllogistic reasoning. "Without man on earth, there is no God on Earth," says Moncado. "Man's moral is God's human virtue. God is moral. Moral is man, and man is God."

The purpose of the *Mission Bulletin*, according to its own statement, is "not to convert any one, but to tell the world the GOOD NEWS that Christ has returned." The biography of the "returned Christ" is presented thus:

Hilario Camino Moncado was born November 4, 1898, in Pondol, a little village of the small town of Balamban, in the province of Cebu,

Philippines. At the age of six he went to India to study at the College of Mystery and Psychic in Calcutta. Young Moncado had the rare distinction of finishing an eight year course in three years. He graduated (class of 1907) with honor at the age of nine. He had obtained the degrees of Doctor of Philosophy of Kabala (K. Ph. D.), Doctor of Philosophy of Numerology (N. Ph. D.) and Doctor of Philosophy of Human Nature (N. H. Ph. D.). Some time after graduation he wrote the wonderful book EQUIFRILIBRICUM which means equality, fraternity and liberty.

That is as far as the issues which are at present available in the National Library carry his life's story. In its feature articles however the *Bulletin* provides additional information. Moncado evidently was an incurable golf addict. He established the "Moncado Crusaders Golf Club" in Hawaii and every issue of the *Bulletin* without exception carries news of the club's activities with appropriate photographs. One article entitled "The Wisdom of Golfing" and signed "Fermie Nena" reveals the type of tie-up Moncado was capable of devising between his favorite sport and his favorite religion. It contains the following enlightening remarks about golf's hidden virtues:

. . . how shall we who believe in the return of Jesus Christ find true humility? Today . . . General Moncado urges every follower to play the game of golf. Why? Because in golfing one learns to understand the wisdom of humility. The wisdom of humility simply means to lower one's own significance. . . . It is also true in golfing. The whole idea of the game is to lower the score . . . The lower the score the better. The highest score is the loser. This is the wisdom of humility in golfing.

Moncado was also fond of beer. Unfortunately for himself and his followers, although he pretended to be Christ returned, he was not able by the exercise of miraculous powers to change water into the beverage of his choice. His disciples apparently asked rather embarrassing questions from time to time about his inability to work miracles. Why did he not show "signs" as Christ did when He was on earth the first time? The *Bulletin* informs us:

Christ as He is today will not use the power of miracles for any reason. He has learned that it did not help Him in any way . . . Jesus drank wine, but nothing in the record ever mentioned of any occasion that he was drunk. General Moncado also drinks beer like any other

man next to you. He never refuses a friendly offer of beer. He likes his beer very much. He drinks with you all the way and he never gets drunk.

The writer, evidently airing the views of Moncado, then proceeds to blame all the drunkenness in the modern world on Christ's miracle at Cana. Miracles therefore were a source of evil, not of good. That is why the General did not work them during his life-time; apparently it was not because he did not have the power to do so.

The *Bulletin* makes the claim that Moncado had "millions" of followers throughout the whole world, although the actual number of "disciples and students" in Hawaii at the time of writing was only 1728. A large percentage of these "millions" was undoubtedly made up of women. Moncado's popularity with the women was assured by a book he had written entitled *The Divinity of Women* in which woman's superiority to man is defended at great length and, judging from the specimens given, with the most incredibly fantastic arguments.

Moncado had also fashioned his own world calendar, the Moncadian calendar, in which the year was made up of thirteen months of twenty-eight days each. The extra month was called Um and was inserted between June and July. As depicted in the *Bulletin*, the calendar carried Moncado's "Five-Star-General" photograph right in the center of every month.

Will all this nonsense come to an end with Moncado's sudden death on the fairways of Agua Caliente? Will Shakespeare's lines be reversed and "the good he did live after him, the evil being interred with his bones"? It is unlikely. Eventually the fanaticism which has created the peanut-eating colonies of Samal and Lanao may subside but it will certainly not die as swiftly nor as suddenly as did Moncado himself. It is unfortunate that an organization like the Filipino Federation, which has such excellent potentialities for good, should have been linked with such theological nonsense as Moncado's "Moral Concept." The Federation has already elected a successor as its head. According to a *Free Press* report Mr. Victor Ra-

majo was elected acting president of the Filipino Federation of America during the nine day convention of the organization which was held at Stockton from July 1 to 9, 1956. The new president, so the report states, has a bachelor of laws degree and is a golf enthusiast. His most important plan is to build a memorial building in honor of the late "General" Moncado. Let us hope it remains a building, not a temple.