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This article is a summary of the report of T. John Fujii on Japanese occupied Manila in June 1943.

Tatsuki John Fujii was born in 1914 in Aichi-ken, Japan and died in Tokyo on 18 August 1996. He had been brought from Japan to California as an infant. His father was a Tendai Buddhist priest who in California quickly became a Methodist minister. T. John Fujii, as he came to be known, grew up in Walnut Grove, Sacramento and Alameda, California and attended Pomona College where his classmates included two well known World War II newspaper correspondents, Russell Brines and Mark Gayn. Subsequently Fujii enrolled briefly at both Southern Methodist University and Drew University, although he did not graduate from either one.

In September 1938 Fujii joined the New York bureau of the *Asahi Shimbun*. In February 1939 he was recruited by a Japanese consular official in New York to join the staff of the *Singapore Herald* which was a Japanese-sponsored English language newspaper published in Singapore. Accordingly, in April 1939 Fujii traveled to Singapore and by May 1940 he was the Managing Editor of the *Singapore Herald*.

At the outbreak of the Pacific War Fujii was interned by the British, first in Changi Prison in Singapore and then in Purana Qila outside New Delhi, India. In August 1942 he was exchanged with Laurencio Marques in Mozambique and returned to Singapore where he worked for the official Japanese news agency, Domei, and for the Information Section of the Imperial Japanese Army.

In June 1943, after a brief trip to Tokyo, Fujii by sheer chance spent one month in Manila because the ship on which he was traveling from Tokyo back to Singapore unexpectedly docked in Manila because of the threat of American submarines.

In August 1948 Fujii wrote a memoir of his wartime experiences entitled *Postscript to Surrender*. Although he seems never to have published this narrative, a xerox copy of it turned up recently in Australia. It is from that document that I have here excerpted Fujii's account of his impressions of Japanese-occupied wartime Manila. His comments, I believe, are especially interesting because they are those of an American trained journalist who, although working at the time for the Japanese, seems to have retained a degree of detachment in recording his observations.

T. John Fujii's Text on Japanese Occupied Manila

There were no further submarine alarms and we made landfall on a beautiful day in June (1943). It was my first glimpse of that beautiful Manila Bay. The convoy crept through the narrow course between Corregidor and Bataan which had been the scene of earlier fighting.

The convoy dropped anchor in the bay but the troopship on which I was aboard pulled up alongside Pier 17. Just as we eased into the slip, a big liner headed out to sea. It was the Teiko Maru with its characteristic square funnels. She was one of the vessels which had been commandeered from the French in Saigon. The ship appeared nearly empty although she was bound for Saigon and Singapore. Port authorities revealed that the Teiko Maru operated on a regular service between the three ports.

We had not been in port more than an hour when the commanding officer announced that the troopship would continue on to Davao. All civilians who were destined for Singapore must disembark and await other transport. The port authorities said he had no information when another vessel was due to leave for Singapore. I thought of the Teiko Maru which had left Manila only a few hours earlier. Here was an example of the poor staff work which had hindered the Japanese war effort, I thought to myself.

The civilians made plans to land in Manila. I rushed to a telephone and contacted an Old Nisei friend of mine. Masaru Ogawa, who now headed Domei's English section in the Philippines. I had not seen him since 1938 when I last met him at International House, New York City. Mas was a graduate student at Columbia University then. He sent a car to pick me up at the pier and in a matter of minutes, I was in the main part of Manila. The Domei organization occupied a large building in the heart of the Escolta district. The Japanese controlled radio station, PIAM, occupied the top floor, Nippon Newsreel, the third story and Domei had all of the second floor. Several sections of the army propaganda department also were housed in the building.

Prices were still cheap in Manila in 1943. Food was plentiful, and a local brewery produced sufficient beer for military as well as civilian personnel.

The Japanese were all housed in comfortable apartment houses and residences in the former American residential section of Manila across the Pasig River. Outwardly, Manila was thriving. There were plenty of commodities on sale. Prices on imported goods were rising but many locally made products were taking their place.

There were a number of excellent nightclubs and cabarets such as "Tom's," "Trocadero" and the "Shanghai Club." Filipinas, mestizas and White Russian women were an added attraction at these rendezvous. French fried potatoes and sizzling steak, corned beef and cabbage, crisp Baguio salads and curries could be obtained at any one of a number of restaurants along the Escolta.

The Japanese operated a number of cafes in Manila, chief among which was the former Casa Manana, now Japanese managed and a favorite with army and civilian personnel.

The Jai Alai was Filipino operated and out of bounds to the Japanese which made it one of the most popular spots among the Filipino circles. There was a definite undercurrent in the Philippines which was unmistakable. Conversations over morning cups of coffee along the Escolta included the latest news broadcast from the San Francisco shortwave radio. Speculators quoted prices according to the American dollar. One pretty little mestizo was even brazen enough to tell me that "the Stars and Stripes still floats over parts of the Philippines."

The threat of the guerrillas constantly hung over occupied Manila. It constituted the chief problem for the Japanese military administration and cropped up in almost every conversation with Japanese officials and Filipino newsmen. Despite all that the Japanese could do, they could not combat rising prices and the influences which the Americans had left behind during the 40 years of rule. The American way of life meant smart clothes, beautiful homes and new motorcars to the Filipinos. The Japanese occupation meant only high prices, controls and regimentation.

I met Jorge B. Vargas on several occasions during my stay in the Philippine capital. Vargas was former secretary to the late Philippine Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon. It was common knowledge in Manila that Quezon had instructed Vargas to remain behind to administer the islands while he left with the government-in-exile and General MacArthur when the Philippines became untenable.

Vargas was mayor of Manila when the Japanese forces occupied Manila on New Year's Day, 1942. The Japanese administration turned to him to carry out their policies. The common Japanese criticism of Vargas was that he was acceptable to the Filipinos but that he lacked executive leadership. At any rate, he was the best man that the Japanese could find at the outset of the occupation.

I was impressed at the magnificence of the Malacañang Palace from where Vargas carried on the government. It was originally designed for the Spanish governors of the Philippines and later served as the official residence of

American governors and high commissioners. It was handed over to the Philippine Commonwealth when Quezon was elected its first president. To the Filipinos, Malacañang Palace symbolized the government and the Japanese very wisely left Vargas in the Palace.

Jose P. Laurel, fiery Manila lawyer, had long been identified with the pan-Asiatic ideals of Japan. He was the man who was being groomed for the presidency of the Japanese-established future puppet republic. While I was in the Philippines, a guerrilla assassin shot him while he was playing golf at the Wack Wack Golf Club in the suburbs of Manila.

The man whom the Japanese wanted to collaborate with them was General Manuel Roxas, later destined to be the first President of the Philippine Republic when the United States forces came back to the islands. Roxas was in retirement and refused all blandishments to come out of seclusion and assume public office. Lieut. General Wachi, then the Japanese military administrator, knew Roxas personally, and it was only through his influence that Roxas was persuaded to join the Preparatory Commission for Philippine Independence which the Japanese later set up.

Another leading Filipino whom I met during my stay in Manila was Claro M. Recto, later earmarked for the foreign ministry portfolio when the Japanese established their puppet regime.

Even during the Japanese occupation, the influence of President Manuel Quezon and Vice-President Sergio Osmeña, then in exile at Washington, were deeply rooted in the Filipino political concepts. It was apparent that the Filipinos firmly believed that the Japanese occupation was to be utilized mainly as a step in their ultimate independence that they had dreamed of since the days of the first Spanish conquerors. They would cooperate with the Japanese so long as they would be able to achieve their independence and realization of a truly Philippine Republic. The Filipinos are a proud race, a hybrid of the pure Spaniard, the Mestizos of every nationality including Chinese and Japanese, and the native tribes, all of whom claimed Filipinos citizenship.

One day, shortly before my departure from Manila, I visited the Santo Tomas internment camp and compared it with my own internment life in India. The internees were housed in the former university in the heart of Manila. Some of the more ambitious internees had constructed a model village out of nipa palm leaves and bamboo. The camp commandant explained that the internees were permitted to make purchases in town from funds which were maintained in a Manila bank. Their internment camp, it appeared to me then, compared very favorably with the treatment I had received from the British at the Purana Qila camp in New Delhi, India.

But finally, it was time to say goodbye to Manila. It had been an enjoyable month in the Philippines. I had been able to observe and compare the Japanese military administration in the Philippines with the efforts that the Japanese had made in Malaya. It was my conclusion that the Filipino leaders were

sincere in their efforts to cooperate with the Japanese administration so long as they were permitted full freedom to work toward their own destiny.

I was booked to sail for Saigon and Singapore aboard the Teia Maru, sister ship to the Teiko Maru, which we had seen steaming for the Asiatic mainland a month earlier. This was one of the few ships left still operating under a semi-peace-time basis. The food was below prewar standards but it was a comfort to sleep in berths with clean linen and to eat in the dining room.

The vessel was only an hour outside Manila Bay when it was reported that a number of American submarines had been sighted lying in wait. The captain ordered the ship back to the safety of the harbor.

We remained anchored in the harbor for several days before the all clear was given and we were able to sail once again for Saigon. The twinkling lights of Cavite could be seen in the distance and the beauty of the Manila Bay sunset equalled the stories we had heard about it. The gun crew remained on the alert all through the journey. There was one anxious night when an over-zealous lookout reported a periscope but fortunately it proved to be a false alarm.

There were further reports of submarine concentrations lying off Cam Ranh Bay on the Indo-China coast but we reached Cap. St. Jacques at the mouth of the Saigon River in safety. There swinging at anchor, we found a number of other vessels, totaling 27 in all, who were waiting their turn to proceed up the river. We waited for two days before we could sail up the winding, narrow river, amid the familiar banks of the mangroves which we had glimpsed four years earlier.

However, I was not permitted to land and we waited on deck while the ship discharged troops for the Burma front. The port of Saigon was chockful of troops and supplies for the new front in Burma. However, Saigon appeared to be normal as it blistered under the hot tropical sun.

Two days later, the ship sighted the familiar Raffles light. Beyond the horizon could be seen the shores of Johore and Changi Point. Eventually the Teia Maru made its way through the inner Harbour where we tied up alongside Empire Docks.

Singapore harbor also was busy with troopships and transport. A German submarine lay alongside one of the piers loading rubber.

There appeared to be little examination at the ship. I walked down the gangplank, hailed a ricksha and in the course of an hour after the ship had docked I was back in the Domei office.