

EVACUEE REPORTS:

FEIGEL,

JEAN C.



I am rendering the following suggestion for three reasons: (1) I have traveled with Mr. Feigel throughout the Agusan, Sulibao, Gibong Valleys; along the east coast of Mindanao from Port Lamon in the south to Cantilan in the north; and resided for a time on an Army Project Farm on the Tago River, and I know by experience of the conditions about which I speak. (2) Mr. Feigel is local quartermaster for the District headquarters, and I have heard about the difficulties that confront him in regard to the procurement of the necessary food stuffs for the USFIP, Agusan Valley sector. (3) I have a plan to offer for your consideration.

I speak only of conditions on Mindanao about which I know personally, though I believe it is correct to presume that a parallel predicament exists throughout the Philippine Islands.

With the safe arrival of arms, ammunition, clothing and medicines for the USFIP, one of the gravest problems that now faces the guerrilla organization is that of an adequate supply of local (P.I.) food. Mindanao is fortunate to the extent of being a tropical country with harvests of essential food - as rice, corn, bananas and camotes - available at periodic intervals, provided the native can be induced to plant enough in surplus to furnish the army. Unfortunately, the Filipino native is neither ambitious nor philanthropic when it comes to his own labors. The average Filipino is not planting more than the bare necessity for his own family.

Although Military authorities are willing and able to pay whatever price might be asked for produce and labor, the native is not interested in money. First of all, payment, out of necessity, must be in "emergency money"; far too many of the hinterland and agricultural natives are still suspicious of the validity of the "new" money. Secondly, - of what use is money in any large amount? There are no stores nor markets open, nor are there any available commodities to buy. For the most part, provincial life is now run on the barter system - rice carried to the coast and exchanged for salt and coconuts, soap exchanged for mongo beans, bundles of coastal nipa for mountain corn, etc. If the ethics of the Army allowed for the distribution of their medicines, quinine and atabrine in particular, in exchange for needed foods, the problem of a steady supply of produce would be partially solved, for the Filipino native regards the prophylactic and remedial quinine and atabrine as a talismanic cure-all. Needless to state, I realize the foregoing idea is not to be considered as ethical.

However, there are certain vital necessities which every native family needs. Necessities, which not only will tempt the Filipino to share whatever he does have, but more important yet, will induce farmers, laborers, fishermen and others to exert the requisite effort by which they may acquire those necessities. I speak of cloth, thread, needles, nails, matches and simple home medicines - as aspirin, oil of cloves, perboric, etc.

I know by what means of transportation such "necessities", as I have mentioned, could ever reach the Philippine Islands. With that in mind I have listed only the most essential that could be transported as cargo in a large enough amount to be available for the plan I will outline below.

I do not pretend to be cognizant of the military plans of Colonel Fertig in regard to the safety of headquarters on Mindanao. However, it is obvious that the extensive, interior Agusan Valley and its tributary valleys must play an important part in eventual safety of the guerrilla forces. It is necessary that large stocks of grain, dried fish, sugar, salt and coconuts be safely stored in depositories throughout that region while the supply routes to the coast are still open. April, May and June will see the end of the rice harvest accessible to that district for this current year. Barter supplies should be on hand as soon as possible for immediate use.

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Rice to the Agusan Valley from last year's harvest was in the process of being transshipped when I left Mindanao the latter part of February. At that time the grain was coming from the Tandag and Tago areas on the east coast; shipped in sailing bancas to Lianga - a 2 to 5 day's trip - with approximately 300 to 500 one-hundred pound sacks to the boat; then carried by cargadores 14 kilometers by trail over the coastal mountains to Los Arcos on the Cibong River - a 50 pound load per man; then loaded on small, open barotos to be run through a series of rapids to the town of Prosperidad - each boat carrying 20 to 30 sacks; from Prosperidad the grain was transported to HQ either by launch (1½ day trip) or by rafts or barotos (4 to 5 day trip). I mention the above rigmarole of shipping as an indication of the importance of rice in army plans. One of the last letters I had from Mr. Feigel from Lianga bewailed the lack of cooperation of the natives on the transporting of the rice supplies. No matter how adequately equipped or clothed the guerrilla soldiers may be, unless they are fed there is no hope of maintaining an army.

In support of my "barter" idea, I offer the following personal experiences:

1) Last spring, while living among a group of Manobos, Mr. Feigel and I could have secured a sack of rice for 3 meters of khaki cloth. Otherwise, the grain was not available. In that one small community we could have acquired at least 100 sacks of rice, if we had had any cloth.

2) At Port Lamon, a few months later, we attempted to buy a supply of locally caught and dried fish. There were none for sale. Yet bancas arriving from the Tago River region were able to exchange rice for fish. Those same natives in the Tago region offered as much as a sack of rice for a discarded and badly mutilated pair of Mr. Feigel's shorts.

3) A tailor at Tandag was willing to sew up a pair of shorts for Mr. Feigel from cloth we had for sufficient, extra thread for his own use for sewing on four more pairs of shorts.

4) A medium-sized chicken was bought for ten two-inch nails.

5) I secured lodging with a native family in Talacogan for two months, awaiting the arrival of the submarine, in exchange for six articles of my discarded clothing.

6) Lavenderas will not work for money in many communities now. Yet no matter how mildewed or patched the clothing might be, they will condescend to wash in exchange for such articles.

I suggest that: -

1) Bolts of light-weight khaki, blue denim, white cotton for infant wear, mosquito netting, and light -weight cottons for shirtings be included in the next cargo to USFIP headquarters, Mindanao. To be of practical use for bartering for a reserve supply of foodstuffs, bolts of yardage should aggregate as many thousand yards as space is available. Yardage represents the "bulk" of the cargo to be shipped.

In addition, small spools of thread for easy exchange should include the three essential colors of white, black and khaki.

Needles should also include sewing machine needles.

Home medicines should be in small amounts for such ailments as toothache, stomach ache, pregnancy, headache, etc.

A supply of seeds should be sent for more intensive farming.



If cargo space is available, nails, matches, petromex wicks, and cheap under vests and drawers are valuable as exchange mediums.

2) A system of trade centers should be established. The details of which can be best worked out at Mindanao. Based on the operation of such a historic enterprise as the Hudson Bay Trading Co, such centers can be strategically placed, necessitating the greater portion of the shipping to be undertaken by the producers themselves. There is no doubt but that the "bamboo telegraph" will advertise the establishment of such trading centers. The peripatetic population of the Island will come many day's journey to secure new cloth. I have myself sailed many days on a banca on the false rumor of a hidden cache of shoes!

Such trade centers would not be considered as money-makers. If handled correctly, money should not appear in any transaction. With the approximately small amount of such essential cargo as can be shipped in, all materials will be at a premium. With judicial management, especially in view of the forthcoming rice harvest, a sizeable reserve of food should be aggrandized.

Time is the essence of this plan. At least, as of a month ago, it was a workable idea. It is unpredictable how long the Japanese will allow easy approach to the Agusan Valley. Once those approaches are closed, I believe the food situation will be the dominant factor of success or failure of the guerrilla movement on Mindanao. If sufficient supplies of the articles I have mentioned can reach Mindanao, within three months the Agusan Valley and its rich, adjacent, agricultural tributaries can become self-sufficient. With the lure and bait of such articles, which every Filipino family needs so drastically, farmers, fishermen, hunters, etc, will be accelerated to activity. Within three months, crops of beans, corn, camotes, squash and other vegetables can be planted and harvested. The Filipino needs something tangible to hold in front of him, if he is to be stirred to activity.

3) I further suggest that I return to Mindanao to aid with this project.

I have been asked by Military personnel why I decided to leave Mindanao, when I had previously declared my intention of remaining. Some such an idea, as I have presented, has been in my mind. Obviously, it was impossible to do anything about it personally from that end. I realize the danger involved. I could not have lived on the war-entrenched hide of Mindanao for over two years, and not have realized the danger. Likewise, the epithet of "suicide squad" is well known by those associated with the USFIP. With my husband still on Mindanao, I would like to do my part in this war in a region I know and at a job at which I might be of use.

There are far too few Americans left on Mindanao. Each man has his own particular job to do in regard to the military set-up. In such a plan as I have outlined, or in some other plan which might be suggested, I believe a woman can very aptly do her share. If you are familiar with the Filipino, you will know the importance he places on his own woman's opinions and ideas. The Filipino woman is the power behind the household; she likewise does the major share of the work. Thus, the part of any work I might undertake in the securing of supplies for the army, falls very neatly into the category of woman's work, and as such, will the rural Filipino recognize it.

I do not know exactly what importance Military personnel in the SW Pacific place on Filipino morale. Having been so intimately placed in that particular locale of the war-zone, I no doubt am biased. Our every thought and action has of necessity included the Filipino and his reactions. If morale is as important in Military strategy, as I believe it to be, the fact that I, an American woman, willingly returned to the P. I., will in itself be something of a morale-builder. As an individual I have no importance, but if I can return with some of the necessities so vitally needed, and which in themselves will be of military importance for securing food, I believe I will have accomplished a great deal of good.



I present these suggestions for consideration, and I hope my own personal application for work in connection with such a plan may be favorably considered.

Sincerely,

Jean C. Feigel

