

EVACUEE REPORTS:

FORD, THOMAS J.

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GENERAL HEADQUARTERS
SOUTHWEST PACIFIC AREA
MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SECTION GENERAL STAFF

Philippine Evacuee Report #245

27 May 1944

Subject: Living conditions and Guerrillas in Panay

From : Mr. Thomas J. Ford

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Name : Thomas J. Ford

Born : 1897 at San Jose, California

Education : BS in Civil Engineering, University of Santa Clara, 1921.

In PI since: 1922

Occupation : Manager and Vice-President of Asturias Sugar Central,
San Juan, Dumalag, Capiz.

Interrogated by G-2 GHQ SWPA

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Mr. Ford spent the entire time since the invasion of Panay in evacuation near Tapaz in Capiz. A stream of guerrilla and civilian visitors constantly visited his camp to enjoy his hospitality, and he had excellent connections with local civilians and his former employees, some of whom were active guerrillas. His information is thus largely hearsay and must be interpreted with this in mind. Mr. Ford is logical, conscientious and loyal, and thinks in an orderly manner. He is careful to express himself fairly in any matter dealing with politics and seems to have high regard for the rights of the people, rather than for active aggrandisement of any political group. It is probable that further information on political lines could be developed.

CHRONOLOGY

- 8 Dec 41 At the Asturias Central near Dumalag in Capiz.
- Mar 42 Helped Major Fowell of the 61st Div, USAFFE in building an airfield at Dumarao.
- 16 Apr 42 Asturias Central burnt by USAFFE in the invasion of Panay. Evacuated to a camp on the Panay River, eight kilometers above Tapas with his family and guests. Ran a small hospital there for the guerrilla army.
- 29 Feb 43 Japanese patrol approached the Ford camp. Evacuated his family to a security area two hours up river on a small tributary.
- 19 Mar 43 Returned to original camp.
- 17 Oct 43 Abandoned his camp and disbursed his guests at the request of the puppet mayor of Tapas when the latter informed Ford that he had had to tell the Japanese that the Fords were there. Moved with his family to the security area.
- 26 Feb 44 Left for evacuation to Australia.
- 9 Mar 44 Spent two days at Colonel Peralta's Command Post.

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Japanese Penetration at Passi: About eighty Chinese, mostly refugees from Iloilo, were living at a hacienda near Passi. The Japanese garrison troops at Passi would often visit them and get haircuts. In September or October, 1943, a mobile unit came straight down from Capias and killed everyone of the Chinese, including women and children. Houses were set on fire and as the people ran out they were bayoneted. The mobile unit then returned to Capias.

Japanese Penetration at Missionary Camp: A group of 16 Americans, mostly American Baptist missionaries, lived in evacuation in a camp about one mile from the Ford camp above Tapas. In December, 1943, a Japanese mobile unit came in and killed all the Americans there before anyone in the Ford Camp knew of the Japanese' presence.

It was reported that the Japanese came from Libacao via Herminez and had spent the previous night at the Barrio of Garcia. They went straight to the camp and must have had previous knowledge of the Americans' presence there. Captain "Tarasaki" commanded the detachment and was accompanied by a Major, P.C. who got the jewels of one of the lady missionaries as plunder.

The guerrilla army later investigated and found about thirty civilian Filipinos in possession of loot taken from the missionary camp. All were killed by the army.

Possible Radar: In October, or November, of 1943, a Filipino cargadore returned to the Ford camp from a trip to Iloilo (with Manuel Garcia). He had seen a machine in a house near the seashore in Iloilo which had a long pole projecting into the air and an azimuth dial around the base. The Japanese would let no civilian approach it. One night there was a big excitement, officers were called out of the house, they inspected the machine and searched the sky with binoculars for an hour or more.

COLONEL PERALTA: An Ilocano, graduate of Baguio Military Academy, graduated at the head of his class in law at Santo Tomas University. Ford saw him in August 1942 and again in March, 1944. He is a hard worker and a strict disciplinarian. He is fatherly and writes personal letters to his officers and his soldiers. He told Ford that he wanted the commissions of his Captains and Lieutenants recognized by the United States Army as a morale factor and in order to give them court martial authority to maintain discipline.

Peralta is a native of Luzon which is an advantage in his present position in that he does not get mixed up in local politics. He was the ranking Filipino officer on Panay after the surrender, and led the guerrilla from its inception. There has never been any question of his authority.

Organization of the Guerrilla: Peralta told Ford that General Christie had arranged at his surrender for certain of his officers to organize guerrilla resistance after a certain time. On 24 June 1942 Ford received a letter from Peralta saying he was organizing a guerrilla, and that everyone should lay low and collect arms and ammunition. Ford believes that Peralta had started his organization shortly before this, together with Garcia, Chaves, Relumia, and Mapa.

Villasis, an old time Filipino Constabulary Officer, had organized a guerrilla outfit in the Pilar district in order to protect civilians from bandits. He joined Peralta as soon as he heard of the latter organization.

LT. COL. GEMPERLE: Born a Swiss, naturalized Filipino citizen. Spent many years in the gold mines in Surigao. Now finance officer, 6th MD.

MAJOR SEGUNDO MAPA: Finance officer 6th Military District. Spent a few weeks in the Ford camp area in 1943, together with his finance office. In February, 1943 when the Japanese approached, he moved his office further into the mountains. There were never any guerrilla presses in the area of Ford's camp.

2
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CAPTAIN BAUTISTA: Commanding Officer of the Tapas area for 6th Military District. A former employee of the Asturias Central. His wife and family lived at the Ford camp until October, 1943.

Civil Government of Panay: The Governor of Antique Province turned in to the Japanese at the time of the invasion and has since acted as Governor for the Japanese. Hernandez, Governor of Capiz Province, was captured by the Japanese in June 1942 and obliged to act as Governor for them. Confessor, Governor of Iloilo Province, escaped the Japanese at the invasion, and Caram was made Governor of Iloilo by the Japanese.

In August 1942, Confessor proclaimed himself Governor of all Panay since the other governors were under Japanese control, and this was confirmed by Peralta.

In October, 1942, Relunia proclaimed a military government of the Island with himself at the head. In two or three months this had died out and nothing more was heard of it. The civil government of Panay under Confessor is recognized by the army. Some taxes are collected in kind by former schoolteachers.

In 1943 Ford suggested that Peralta proclaim a military government with civilians as advisors only since the Island was at war and a stronger control seemed necessary. Peralta replied in a letter dated 24 August 1943 saying that "I have a big stick" and will cooperate with the civilian government.

Hernandez: Governor of Capiz at the Japanese invasion, cousin of General Roxas and an old friend of Mr. Ford's who saw him constantly before the invasion. He later cooperated with USAFFE before the surrender and was instrumental in sending supplies to Corregidor and Masbate. At the Japanese invasion he hid in mangroves swamps in Panay in Capiz with Roxas' mother, Mrs. Picase, and his family. In June, 1942, he was captured by the Japanese and obliged to act as Governor of Capiz for them.

When Ford saw Peralta in August, 1942, the latter asked him and Gemperle what the facts were as to Hernandez' loyalty. Both men okayed him. Peralta declared himself satisfied with their guarantees. Somehow the guerrillas got him out of the hands of the Japanese and held him in custody. Later Ford heard that Hernandez was acting Governor of Capiz for the guerrilla.

In November or December of 1942 Ford heard that Hernandez had been taken to the Passi area and concentrated there by the army, and in January 1943 Ford got a letter from Hernandez in concentration appealing to him for help. Ford wrote a letter to Colonel Relunia saying that Hernandez had helped the army and he believed him to be true and loyal. Hernandez was released in May, 1943. Ford invited him to stay at his camp but he went to the Dumarao area and Ford heard that he married there. About December 1943 it was reported that Hernandez had been captured by the Japanese while in the way to Sibuyan by boat.

CONFESSOR: Pre-war director of the Bureau of Commerce, he suddenly became very rich from some mine deal, and quietly resigned. Later he became Governor of Iloilo and later still was replaced by Caram and made head of the "Cooperative" in Manila. Later still Quezon released Confessor as Governor of Iloilo and Confessor evacuated at the Japanese invasion and subsequently became Governor of Panay. He is a good man, energetic and aggressive. An independent, he was opposed to Quezon at one time. He may have supporters who date from his mining business and are untrustworthy.

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CARAM: ✓ Syrian, a doctor in Iloilo with a highclass Spanish clientel. Mr. Ford knows him well. Caram was elected to the Constitution Convergence and later replaced Confessor as Governor of Iloilo. When Confessor again became Governor of Iloilo, Caram had no position. He was captured by the Japanese at the time of the invasion and works for them as puppet governor of Iloilo.

In March, 1944, Peralta told Ford that Caram is secretly working for the guerrilla. As Peralta cannot tell anyone of this, Caram may have to pay with his life.

THOMAS DE CASTRO: ✓ Former principal of Iloilo highschool. Wrote a letter to Ford saying he was chief officer and civilian advisor of Panay and wanted to locate Colonel Peralta. He later visited the Fords who referred him to local military headquarters. Ford does not know what authority he has for his position. Reported he never reached Peralta.

Neighborhood Associations: These are being organized by the Japanese in each garrison town along the same lines as in Luzon. Each inhabitant is registered and instructed to report the presence of every newcomer. One of the main purposes of this arrangement is food control. The inhabitants are given a rice ration according to the number of people registered and all extra rice must be turned in to the Japanese warehouse in each garrison town. Any extra rice not reported is confiscated or burned and the people punished.

Food Supply in Panay: Panay was always a "rice bowl", and produced more rice than she could consume. It is still fairly plentiful in the area around Sara and in the center of the Island from Dao to Pototan. The Japanese exercise a strict control of rice supplies in their garrison towns and the people in many areas are suffering from insufficient diet. Peralta claims that he has enough rice to last one year. In February 1944 the army was attacked by Japanese and succeeded in breaking their control somewhat either by taking their towns or by burning the Japanese in their garrisons as at Dumalag.

Sugar, too, was also always plentiful in prewar Panay. All factories were destroyed at the Japanese invasion and as it takes fourteen months for a crop to mature, sugar is now very scarce. Some is produced by crude hand methods along the Antique coast and in the center of the Island between Janinay and Dumalag. It is a crude product and apical costs 100 pesos (prewar price, 8 pesos). The quantities produced are not known but it is of some aid to the army.

Vegetables are available in limited quantities.

Meat of all kinds is very scarce since almost all stock has already been killed off and has not been replaced. The Japanese eat what they can and kill the rest so that the guerrilla army will not have any. Carabocs are now protected by the army as beasts of burden and cannot be used for eating.

Fish are produced in limited quantities in the Fish ponds on the mangrove coast around Panay and Ponte Vedra in Capi. The guerrilla army collects spawn and in eight months fish is ready for harvesting. The fish are dried and brought inland for use by the army. Amount produced is unknown but Mr. Ford says it was a common article of army diet up to February, 1944.

MAJOR THOMAS H. POWELL: C.E. - was in charge of engineering for the 61st Division, and requested Ford's help in building an airfield at Dumaroo in March, 1942. Ford supplied men and equipment. Powell later went to Cebu and joined General Chenoweth.

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MAJOR FERTIG Succeeded Major Powell as Engineer officer for the 61st Division before the surrender. He did not surrender and as the ranking American officer felt responsible for all Americans in the months after the surrender. In order to avoid possible friction from American officers serving under Filipinos, he took all Americans under his command. This was satisfactory to Peralta as Americans were made use of in this way.

CAPTAIN HARRIS, USMC An Annapolis graduate. Escaped from Corregidor; swam to Bataan and made his way south by boat to Panay. He arrived at Ford's camp in August, 1942. Ford went to see Peralta and it was subsequently arranged to meet Harris and get him a boat in which to go to Australia carrying letters and documents from Peralta to SWPA. Reported he later started for the China coast in a motor boat and got as far as Balabac.

CHAMBERLAIN Had escaped with Harris and was waiting on the coast to go with him to Australia. Rank and branch of service is unknown.

LT. GLEW: Visited Ford's camp after escape from Japanese prison camp in Iloilo. Planned to go with Harris.

SGT. MACKIE: Visited Ford's camp with Glew after escape from Japanese prison camp in Iloilo. Planned to go with Harris but did not go as Ford saw him again in December 1942 at his camps.

MANUEL GARCIA Spaniard, brother-in-law of Ford at Asturias Sugar Central. Stayed on at the Central when the Fords evacuated as he did not want to live in the mountains. He came up to Ford's camp in August 1942 and said that when the Japanese came to the Central he had surrendered with a white flag and they had let him stay. In August the guerrilla came to the Central and Garcia told them that the Japanese would return early in the morning. They thereupon set an ambush and advised Garcia to go away. He joined the Fords. In the ambush it was reported that some Japanese were killed and their Captain was wounded and possibly killed. The puppet Mayor of Dumalag later reported to the guerrilla that he had seen a Japanese message saying that "Captain X" was betrayed by Garcia and killed.

Garcia hated the hardships at the Ford camp and strongly desired to join his family in Manila. In October 1943 he left and negotiated with Governor Caram for surrender. He later turned in at Iloilo and it is reported that he was well treated and on June 12, 1943 left to join his family in Manila.

MR. & MRS. EUGENIO PICAZO An aged couple in ill health living with Mr. & Mrs. Veterbo (sister of Governor Hernandez) in Panay in Capis. Mrs. Picazo, the mother of General Roxas, her son Eveniste Picazo, Roxas' half brother, an attorney from Manila, came down from Manila to Panay in June, 1943 and managed to bring Mr. and Mrs. Picazo back to Manila. They arrived in Manila 24 June 1943 and Mrs. Ford later got a letter from Mrs. Picazo.

DR. MITON: Dr. Miton and his wife, the latter daughter of Mrs. Picazo, were living in Panay in Capis in June, 1943.

ALABASTRO Came to the Ford's camp in June 1943 with Captain Pertes of G-2, 6th Military District. Alabastro talked a good deal saying that he was a broker in Manila and had come down to see Peralta. He was blindfolded when approaching Peralta's command post. Mr. Ford reports he is a brainy man and knew many important people in Manila by name.

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MASACRE OF MANILA: Alabastro said that a massacre was planned in Manila in which all puppet officials who had worked for the Japanese would be liquidated shortly before the arrival of the American Army.

GENERAL ROXAS: According to a letter received by Mrs. Ford, written by Mrs. Picaso and dated 27 June 1943 in Manila, General Roxas was then sick, mournful and so changed that she hardly knew him. He had fever attacks daily. Alabastro also said that Roxas was sick and confined to his house, when Alabastro stopped at the Ford's came in June, 1943.

CAPTAIN JUAN ESCATY: A Spanish sea captain, Filipino citizen, head of the shipping department of Joaquin Elisalde & Company, Iloilo. Came to the Ford camp with his wife and two daughters with Iloilo. Was bombed in December, 1941. He became seriously sick of dysentery and left the camp with his family in November, 1943 in order to negotiate with Governor Caram for surrender. Later reported ill in Iloilo.

LUCAS BAYOT: Filipino from Masbate. Stranded with his son and daughter in Panay at the time of the invasion. Mr. Ford met them in Dumalag and brought all three to his camp for safety. They returned to Masbate in August, 1942.

DR. THOMAS BERTUCIO: A Filipino doctor; stayed at the Ford camp with his wife (a daughter of Lucas Bayot) and his daughter. Ran a small hospital at Ford's camp for the army. After the massacre of the Americans at the missionary camp he wanted to get away from Americans and left Ford's camp on Christmas day, 1943 to see the puppet Mayor of Dumalag in order to arrange permission from the Japanese to go back to Masbate. Later reported that he had started for Masbate.

DE LEON: Employee of the Asturias Central. Lived at the Ford camp with his wife and four children. Left with Dr. Bertucio for Dumalag in December, 1943.

ALBERT KING: American Goodyear Tire representative in Iloilo. At the bombing of Iloilo in December, 1941, he evacuated with his wife and small son to the Asturias Central. He was quite jittery and Ford built a house for him at the Central. In June, 1942, Ford took King to Tapaz and each of them set up evacuation camps in the area for their families. When Panay was invaded in April, 1942, King moved his family up to Tapaz but was not satisfied with the security of the camp and on 18 April 1942 left with his family to find a more secure place. In September, 1943, King stayed with the Fords for a few days after the Japanese penetrated at Sara. He was reported captured by a Japanese mobile unit in Aklan in December, 1943, brought to the missionary camp and killed there along with the other Americans. King was big and strong and had been a boxer. He had an anti-Japanese phobia and seemed "not normal" in this way.

"LOURDES" LORING: American girl, sister of Fräns Loring. Stayed with the Fords at the evacuation camp. Her aged parents were held in concentration in Iloilo and in August 1942 she got a letter from them saying that her father was seriously ill in St. Paul's hospital. She later went down to join them in internment.

MARIA C. FORD, THOMAS J. FORD, JOHN E. FORD: Children of Mr. & Mrs. Ford, 18, 17, and 16 years old respectively, living in Manila. A letter from General Roxas' mother to Mrs. Ford in June, 1943, said that the letter had seen all three children and that they were well.

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