Father Ducós and the Muslim Wars: 1752-1759

It is then proposed to proceed to Misamis where a small stone Fort has been built lately to command the Pass of Panguel Lake. This Place is a Station of the utmost consequence...

— "Plan for an Expedition for the Conquest of the Southern Philippines" (Document in the British Museum)

Toda la gente se halla metida en la cota; yo defendiendo mi casa y la de Dios con mi guarnición de cantores, sacristanes, etc.; ... aunque la cota puede mantenerse algunos meses, pero Iligan acaba, si esto no se toma de veras.

— José Ducós, (16 June 1753)

When the British conquered Manila in 1762, they already had a definite plan for subduing the rest of the Islands, and in particular the Visayas and Mindanao. That plan had been drawn up after an extensive (and surreptitious) naval reconnaissance undertaken in connection with England’s going to war against Spain. The “Plan” called for an alliance between the British and the Sultan of Sulu. Then, through Sulu’s mediation, a “confederacy” was to be organized, involving the other Muslims of Mindanao. The British would supply them with arms and ammunition, and then threaten the Christian towns and villages all over the Philippines that unless they accepted British rule the Muslim pirates would be let loose upon them. This (said the author of the Plan) would strike such terror among the Christian native population, as well as among their Spanish missionary parish-priests, that they would have no alternative but to accept

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British rule: “The General Terror of the Moors will influence as well the Indians as the Padres to submit, when they find that this only can protect them from in truth the greatest of all Calamities.”

The Misamis Fort

This “Plan” has been attributed by Blair and Robertson to William Draper. Father Nicholas Cushner S.J., who has examined the original document in the British Museum, considers this attribution unlikely. He believes that the Plan originated not with Draper nor with Lord Anson (in whose handwriting it is) but with Dalrymple. The fact that Dalrymple was well acquainted with the bays and harbors of the Visayas and Mindanao is attested by his sketches which are now in the New York Public Library. But it does not really matter whose Plan it was. Whatever its authorship, it was essential to the Plan for the British to seize and hold three places. They must first take Zamboanga and Basilan, for this would put them in direct touch with the Muslims; this would put them in contact with the Muslims of Malanao. In the “Plan’s” quaint spelling:

It is then proposed to proceed to Missamis where a small Stone Fort (has been) built lately to command the Pass of Panggel Lake. This Place is a Station of the utmost consequence as the Possession of it opens a Communication with the Illan on with whom by the mediation of Sooloo the Confederacy must be made.

According to the “Plan” the Misamis fort could be held with a garrison of twenty-five Europeans, supported by a guard-ship manned by a detachment of thirty men, also Europeans.¹

The strategic importance of Misamis had been seen not only by the British but also by the Spaniards. At the urging of a Jesuit priest (Father Jose Ducós) and of the Spanish military authorities, the central government in Manila in 1755 had finally authorized the construction of the fort and had placed it under the direction of Father Ducós. The fort was strategically located: for it was built upon a tongue of land commanding the entrance to Pangil Bay.

¹In order to avoid footnotes, all bibliographical references (including those related to the British Plan) are in the Bibliographical Note at the end of the article.
Pangil Bay today is like any other body of water of great commercial value: rich in fish and sufficiently deep to allow the ships to come in and haul away the timber or the copra or the hemp or the rice and corn which are the region’s chief products. But in the eighteenth century, its significance was largely military: for it was through Pangil and the rivers that emptied into it that the Malanao Moros emerged periodically in their swift boats, to deal fire and destruction upon the Christian villages of all the Islands, and carry off their population into slavery.

Hence the importance of sealing off Pangil. The British called it a “lake”, and in some ways it presented the aspect of a lake, for it was long and narrow like a vermiciform appendix, and was hemmed in on both sides by hills and mountains and by a narrow coastal plain. Pangil Bay today divides what are now two provinces: Lanao and Misamis Occidental. About ten miles long and about two miles at its widest, Pangil Bay tapers gradually southwestward until it finally disappears in a large marsh encircled by low hills. Those hills are in the isthmus connecting the Zamboanga Peninsula with the mainland of Mindanao. Cut a canal through that isthmus, and you would have direct sea lanes between the ports in the north (Misamis, Iligan, Cagayan de Oro, Cebu) and those in the south (Pagadian, Cotabato, Zamboanga, Davao).

Whether or not such a canal will ever be constructed we can leave to the future. At the moment our concern is with the past, when Pangil swarmed with Muslim boats; when no Christian village in the Visayas or Mindanao or even in southern Luzon was safe; when the Philippine Islands were in their gravest peril, and when the Christian Filipinos were fighting for survival.

Part I

A New Barbarian Invasion

The Muslim raids that had plagued the Philippine Islands from the beginning of Spanish rule, attained almost incredible intensity in the two decades from 1752 to 1773. But it was in 1754 that these raids reached their climax. As Zuñiga puts it, that was the year in which the Muslims made their greatest inroads into the Christianized portions of the Philippines.
Some historians of the Muslim wars (notably Juan de la Concepción and Joaquín Martínez de Zuñiga) have been somewhat naive in putting all the blame for these raids upon the Sultan of Jolo. The Sultan at the time was Bantilan who had usurped the sultanate from his brother Ali Muddin in 1749. Ali Muddin had sought asylum in Manila and had been given not only hospitality but a royal welcome, with all the pomp and pageantry due to a monarch. After the festivities and the pageantry were over, the Dominicans had taken him in hand and had taught him Christian Doctrine and the devotion of the Rosary. In due course they had baptized him, giving him the new name of King Ferdinand I. At this juncture a new Governor General, the Marquis of Obando, had arrived and had found Ali Muddin on his hands. Partly to put an end to Moro piracy, and possibly also to escape from domestic troubles in Manila (for Governor Obando had promptly fallen afool of both the Archbishop and the friars), Obando had raised his sights towards the South and had decided to send a large expedition to restore Ali Muddin to his sultanate in Jolo.

That expedition had been a disaster. Part of the fleet was lost. The other part was repulsed by the guns of Bantilan. Ali Muddin himself, accused of duplicity, was brought back a prisoner to Manila and thrown into Fort Santiago. Subsequent expeditions fared better, including a colorful visit to Jolo by Ali Muddin’s daughter Fatima. But the fact that the Spanish fleet had been initially repelled by the Jolo defenses was the reason (said the historians) for the intensified piratical activity.

The haughty Bantilan who ruled the Kingdom of Jolo in the absence of his brother, undertook to induce, by the victory he had gained over the Spaniards, the men of Mindanao to break the peace which they were observing with us and to harass us as much as they could; and he urged all the pirates to take up arms against the Spaniards.... Then the seas of the Visayas were seen covered with little fleets of Moros who carried desolatton everywhere. Nothing was heard of, save plundering, the burning of villages, the seizing of vessels, captivities, and atrocities which the Moros committed....

That is the way Zuñiga puts it. But was all this fury really due merely to the influence of Bantilan? What was it that moved, at one and the
same time all the Muslim tribes of Jolo, Cotabato, Tobuc, and Lanao
to take to the seas and attack the Christian villages in the fiercest raids
on record?

There was (as we shall see) an economic motive behind all this
piracy. But there is also in the history of nations some mysterious
force — a *Zeitgeist* — that at one given moment impels whole nations
into a similar course of action. How else explain the Crusades, or the
spread of Islam, or some of the spectacular marches of Empire, or (to
come to our own day) the great blind movements of Hippiedom? It
would be naive to explain such widespread movements merely by
economic forces or merely by the influence of one man. Was it Attila
alone who drove the Huns westward? Chesterton’s lines have been
branded as “rhetorical”, but they describe accurately the inner nature
of the Barbarian invasions from East and North, when (as he puts it)
“the ends of the world waxed free”:

For the end of the world was long ago
When the ends of the world waxed free,
When Rome was sunk in a waste of slaves
And the sun drowned in the sea.

When Caesar’s aim fell out of the sky
And whoso hearkened right
Could only hear the plunging
Of the nations in the night.

When the ends of the earth came marching in
To torch and cresset gleam.
And the roads of the world that lead to Rome
Were filled with faces that moved like foam,
Like faces in a dream.

Could it not have been some similar mysterious force that suddenly
—in the decade of the 1750’s — unleashed all the Muslim tribes of
Mindanao and Sulu and sent them in large marauding parties in a
persistent and determined effort to destroy the Christian communi-
ties of Mindanao and the Visayas and Luzon?
The Slave Market

But there was also an economic motive, and it was a very strong one: namely, the demand for slaves in the slave-markets of Cotabato, Jolo, and eventually Batavia. The wholesale depopulation of the Visayan Islands — and with it the decrease in the Royal Treasury (as Barrantes puts it) — compelled the Spanish Court to lodge a protest with the Court in Holland over the fact that the Dutch colonial government in Batavia was tolerating the sale of Filipino slaves in the Dutch East Indies. The slaves were gathered in Jolo and Mindanao, and from there they were shipped to the Dutch East Indies. Sometimes the slaves were not sold for money but were exchanged for arms and ammunition.

As a result of these raids the population of the Visayas and Northern Mindanao dwindled perceptibly. During one raid on the village of Odiongan in Romblon, 101 of the inhabitants were captured. The population of that village dropped from 230 to 70. In Banton, 67 persons were taken in one raid. In Mindoro, the Moros anchored in the Piloto River near Bongabon and ravaged the area, capturing 150 of the natives: 100 from Bongabon and 50 from Bulalacao and Manaol.

Where exact figures are lacking, the decline in population was reflected in the decrease in the annual tribute. In the seven-year period between 1750 and 1757, the number of persons paying tribute in Kalibo decreased from 1174 to 549. In Butuan, the number of tribute-paying persons dropped from 800 to 130.

The most frightful depopulation was caused in northern Mindanao in the districts of Butuan and Caraga (now in Davao Province), and on the island of Siargao off the Surigao coast. Almost all the towns in the three districts were sacked and reduced to ashes, leaving the entire area a desert. Only the little military post of Linao was left, which was too far inland and up the river to be attacked. From Butuan district, three hundred persons were taken into slavery. Two thousand persons from Caraga and 1600 from Siargao were either slain or taken captive. The few survivors fled to the hills, unwilling (understandably) to return to the towns. The once-flourishing gold mines of Surigao were abandoned.
The Visayan Raids

But if the depopulation of Mindanao was frightful, that of the Visayas was equally so.

Among the islands hardest hit was Leyte. That island had always been a target for Moro raids through the decades: but in 1754 they came several times, first in March, then in June, then in July. The two largest towns in the island — Sogod and Maasin — were sacked and burned. Smaller villages (like Hinundayan, Cabalcan, and Liloan) were likewise reduced to ashes.

Some modern writers, lacking historical perspective, have called in question the wisdom (or even the integrity) of the missionaries who built such large massive churches of stone or brick, reinforced with even more massive buttresses, which must have taken the townspeople many years to build. What these writers have forgotten is that these churches were built at a time when the people, with their flimsy houses, had no other refuge except the church. The church was not only a place of worship (and as such it had to be large enough to hold all the people of the region on the great feasts); it was also a place of refuge — large enough for all the town to live in, and strong enough to withstand the battering and the cannonading of a determined enemy. How useful such a church was in time of need may be seen in the case of Hilongos, where the townspeople fled to the church and stood a siege by two thousand Moros which lasted eleven days. Another example was the siege of Palompon.

The details of the siege of Palompon (related by Juan de la Concepción in his thirteenth volume) have come down to us from the accounts of the Jesuit missionaries who had charge of the missions of Leyte. On the 9th of July 1745, twenty-five boats anchored off Palompon and over one thousand Moros disembarked. The boats had come in brave style, with flags and pennants flying. The townspeople, in great confusion, fled from their dwellings to the church. The initial confusion helped the Moro invaders, who were able to set fire to the rectory and the sacristy, despite the fact that the latter was defended by two bulwarks.

After the initial confusion was over, the people settled down to the grim task of defense. The Moros outside had ringed the church with trenches and breastworks, and had set up their cannon (lantakas) and
other weapons. The firing lasted two days, and it was so fierce that the defenders in those two days suffered seventeen casualties: seven dead, and ten wounded. Besides cannon balls, the Moros hurled flaming darts in an effort to set fire to the woodwork inside the church. Several fires were in fact started, but were promptly put out by the defenders. The task of putting out fires fell largely to the women whose main function was to cook for the men and to fetch water from the well.

On the third day the firing was abated somewhat and the Moros began preparing to storm the church. Two moving towers were constructed (like Roman tortoises) upon each of which a gun was mounted that could shoot directly into the interior of the church. Ladders were brought to the church windows in an effort to force an entry. Not only were these attempts repelled, but the Christian defenders actually emerged in a brave sortie that caused confusion and a certain amount of havoc among the Moros.

This type of warfare continued for two more days. On the fifth day of the siege, after one more sortie by the Leyteños, the Moros decided to give up the attempt. They retired to their boats and sailed away in the direction of Carigara. At least fifty Moros had died in the five-day battle.

The townspeople now emerged from the church, doubtless grateful to be alive: but they were in no holiday mood. They had nothing to eat and no place to live in. Their houses had been burned, their crops destroyed, their boats and even their tools were gone. They could neither farm nor fish for lack of implements, and the women could not weave, for lack of material.

Such was the devastation of a Moro attack in a town brave enough to defend itself and fortunate enough to have a strong church or fort. But not all towns were as fortunate. In the neighboring island of Biliran, for instance, the entire population was carried away into slavery.

The Calamianes were particularly unfortunate. Some places, like Culion, were well defended and could repel the invaders. But other islands were defenceless. Linacapan was attacked repeatedly. One place — Busuanga — was invaded ten times in the space of three months, between June and August 1754.
The Attaching Party

These raids were not carried out by small or stray bands of pirates. They were large flotillas of several hundred warriors — sometimes numbering as many as two thousand men. They were, in fact, a whole nation on the attack. They went in sixty-eight boats against the town of Kalibo in Panay. Thirty boats attacked the town of Ilog in Negros. On the island of Banton, the Moros in fifty-seven boats landed up the coast and attacked the town by land.

The one thousand men that had attacked Palompon had come in twenty-five boats, which gives an idea of the size of these vessels. Each one could carry from forty to fifty warriors with their weapons and lantakas, and still leave room for captives and the booty that they captured.

The Missionary’s Role

In these raids, the role of the missionary was often crucial, for it was the missionary in many cases who upheld the people’s will to fight. In general it might be said that a town could defend itself if three things were present: (a) if the town had adequate defences; (b) if the people were brave enough to fight; and (c) if the missionary himself had certain qualities of leadership. Where one or more of these factors were lacking, the townspeople suffered, and the missionary with them.

Among the distressing cases on record is that of two Recolet missionaries in Caraga who at the approach of the Moros had taken to the hills. They were wandering about in the rough terrain for four days until overtaken by the Moros. One was captured and taken away as a slave to Lake Lanao. The other managed to escape, and eventually turned up at the military post in Linao: but he had gone insane and was taken to Manila where he died demented.

Other missionaries suffered grievously. In Calavite and in Siargao, the parish priests were killed. In Ticao, the missionary was captured and taken from island to island, until he was ransomed. In Mindoro, an error of judgment of the corregidor caused untold suffering. The Moros had landed in a river some distance away from Calapan, and the corregidor, expecting the attack to come from the sea, ordered the artillery brought to the shore. But the Moros had left their boats and had walked cross-country, attacking Calapan from the land. The entire
town was razed to the ground. Many of the inhabitants were taken captive, including the Recoletto prior who was too old to run. His fellow priest, a younger man, was able to flee with the corregidor across the Verde Island passage to Batangas.

**Southern Luzon**

But Batangas itself was not safe — nor, for that matter, were many of the towns and villages in southern Luzon. In June 1745, Balayan and Batangas town were both attacked.

The following month (July 1754) the town of Catanawan in Tayabas province was burned to the ground. Many of the inhabitants were taken captive, and one government champan was captured.

In June 1754 (the same month as the Batangas raids) several towns in Albay were attacked and destroyed. The Muslim attacks went as far north as Masinloc in Zambales, causing a general alarm in the coastal provinces.

Mariveles itself, at the gateway to Manila Bay, was attacked (in 1757) by a small armada of eleven boats. The people put up a token resistance (una resistencia débil) and fled to the hills. The fact that such raids could be made, almost within sight of Manila, was proof of the powerlessness of the government to extend protection to the Christian communities outside of the city walls. There was little, in fact, that the government could do. No place was safe, unless it defended itself. No succor could be sent, for the day of the fast-moving steamships had not yet arrived. "When help sailed from Manila" (says one chronicler) "the Moros were already on their return trip in their fast boats, loaded with spoils and ready to invade another island."

But there was more than just apathy that was responsible for this helpless stance of the islands. Father Ducós in his letters complained bluntly that the Moros could be effectively contained if the government officials were not so anxious to carry on a profitable trade with them. Another missionary put the matter in an even worse light: "And at times, while the pirates were devastating one island, in the next island the leaders of the squadron sent to pursue them were peacefully exhibiting their merchandise for sale."
The Peril of the Seas

Some of the expeditions sent out from Manila ended in disaster. One expedition was sent to Palawan to establish a fort there. An epidemic broke out: 170 persons died; the rest, sick or weakened, returned to Manila. The expedition had produced nothing but 170 deaths and a loss to the treasury of nearly thirty-seven thousand pesos.

In November 1753, one expedition (the first under the command of the unfortunate Miguel Gómez Valdés) was sent to the Visayas and Mindanao. It never got beyond Mindoro. Leaving Mindoro, one of the galeras sank with twenty-one men drowned. Another vessel also sank, though without loss of life. Other vessels lost their masts. The net achievement of the expedition was to collect the survivors and bring them back to Cavite. Yet despite this disaster (which, according to the historians, was not entirely without fault on the part of Valdés), another expedition was fitted out by Obando and placed under the same commander: this was the expedition to Iligan in 1754, to which we shall return.

 Needless to say, the seas during all this time were unsafe for navigation. In April 1755 a merchant-ship sailed from Zamboanga under Captain Juan de Molina. It was boarded by the Moros, who killed the captain and sacked the ship. Two years previously, the galera “Santiago” had set out from Zamboanga to patrol the Mindanao coast. At midnight in October, the ship ran into some enemy vessels. By daybreak it was surrounded by a large flotilla of Moros, consisting of thirty-three boats. Ironically, the Moro flagship had belonged to the Government. This was the galera “Santa Rita” which the Muslims had captured in Palawan. Another ship, the falua “San Ignacio”, had also been captured by the Moros in Palawan. Finding himself hopelessly surrounded, the captain, Francisco Rodriguez Figueroa, decided to scuttle ship. He set fire to the magazine; the ship exploded, killing Figueroa and his crew of fifty-two men. The Moros who had boarded the ship were likewise blown up, as well as some of the smaller Muslim craft that had come too close. It was a heroic death, which the Government in Manila rewarded by granting life pensions to the widows of Figueroa and his crew.
The Fall of Tandag

In a year filled with tragic events, it would be difficult to find any one event more tragic than the fall of Tandag in Surigao. Tandag was a small town on the eastern coast of Mindanao, to which was attached a stone fort, garrisoned by two companies of soldiers: one company of Spaniards, and one of Pampangos.

It was in mid-July 1754 that the Moros came to Tandag. They were Maguindanao Muslims from Tamontaca led by the Datu Dumango. The helpless people of the town naturally fled to the fort for refuge, which increased the population inside the fort without increasing the food supply. The Moros ringed the fort about in a formal siege, and eventually the food supply gave out. Reduced to starvation, some of the people began to talk of surrender, which the commandant was barely able to prevent by threatening to kill anyone who attempted to surrender. But it was a lonely fight. No help came. Tandag was doomed.

On the first of December, on a rainy morning, the Moros finally stormed the fort. They captured one of the bulwarks and thus were able to turn the fort's own guns against the defenders who had retreated to the magazine room and the chapel. At last, finding no hope of escape and unable to face the prospect of slavery, the commander of the fort (a Spanish lieutenant) slew his own wife with a cutlass (chafarote), and, thus armed, went out to meet. the enemy, who promptly dispatched him. Many Moros died in the fray, as did also the entire garrison: Spaniards as well as Pampangos. The native population tried to run away but were all captured and taken as slaves, including the Recoletos missionary who had tried to escape by hurling himself from the bulwark to the shore below.

It was six weeks later, on the 13th of January 1755, that word got to Father Ducós in Iligan that Tandag had fallen. He had just finished a letter to Manila, but he added a postscript: "Acabo de tener carta con la notida de que Tandag se perdió: ergo..." It fell to Father Ducós to ransom the Recoletos missionary and to rebuild the Tandag fort. He gave it a garrison of one hundred Boholanos. In subsequent years the Moros returned and attacked the fort of Tandag: each time, the Boholano garrison sent them away.
The Siege of Lubungan

But there were compensations, even in that dreadful year of 1754. One of these was the victory of the little town of Lubungan on the western coast of Mindanao, not far from Dapitan and Dipolog, in what is now called the Province of Zamboanga del Norte. The experience of Lubungan was a proof of what a determined population could do, even when faced with impossible odds.

Lubungan was situated on a river, a few miles inland from the coast. It was not a large town: merely a few flimsy houses, with a few hundred inhabitants, and a church and rectory staffed by a Spanish Jesuit missionary. The whole town was surrounded by a stockade. There was no military garrison. In case of attack, the little town had to defend itself, with its own men and boys, under its own native (civilian) leaders.

On the 9th of July 1754, a Moro flotilla sailed upriver and landed within sight of the town, but out of range of the stockade’s lantakas. There were thirty-six large boats and many smaller craft. The defenders estimated the attacking force at about two thousand men.

The next day, having cleared the approach to the town, the Moros advanced in single file. It was a long line, lancers ahead, kampilan welders behind. The idea (presumably) was to get close to the town, and then rush the gates until they gave way. But a volley from the stockade broke up the invading line, and the Moros retired out of range.

The Moros now dug trenches and put up breastworks to the north of the village and placed their guns in position. All the while, the firing was kept up on both sides, which continued through the night and the next day in spite of the heavy rains — for July is a rainy month. By the morning of the 12th, the breastworks on the north were completed, and the Moros began to dig trenches to the east of the village. This would have completely sealed off the village from any possibility of help from Dipolog or Dapitan, as it would close the “backdoor”— i.e. the mountain paths. As the foodstores were getting low, the Jesuit missionary derided that the only hope for Lubungan was to prevent the completion of the eastern breastworks by attacking the workers.

Accordingly, two small bands of “Lubunganons” emerged from the stockade from two directions simultaneously. One of these groups
(composed of boys and young men — "eran jóvenes de pocos años") had a comparatively easy time. The other party had a more bloody encounter. Armed with spears, javelins, and bow and arrows, they inflicted heavy casualties on the Moros.

This sudden attack forced the Moro besiegers to change their tactics. They gave up the attempt to dig trenches to the east, and concentrated their forces in the north. All that night was spent in feverish activity, cutting down coconut trees and setting them up as gun turrets to command the enclosure. By daybreak, one of the turrets was completed and ready for use: and from his coign of vantage, the Muslim gunner could look directly into the interior of the stockade and aim his gun accordingly. Unfortunately for him, he had no periscope and no Sperry bombsight: he had to raise his head each time in order to aim. One of the cool-headed citizens of Lubungan, biding his time, waited for just such a moment: then he fired at the gunner’s head — rendering the turret useless for the rest of the daylight hours, for no one could climb up to the turret safely within sight of the fort.

With one gun turret out of commission and the other not completed, the Moros now turned (on the 13th) to psychological warfare. They set up a horrifying din, with blood-curdling yells accompanied by much brandishing of swords and lances, obviously intended to intimidate the defenders in the stockade. The following day (14 July) the shouting was resumed. But by this time the Christians had learned the game and they began to raise a tumult of their own. Not content with shouting, the Lubungan defenders made noise by beating the drums and ringing the church bells. To show their defiance better, they waved improvised flags made out of their neckerchiefs and bandannas with holy pictures paste on them. Two such flags were hoisted above the town: one from the church tower, another from a gun-emplacement: one banner carried a picture of St. Francis Xavier; the flag from the church tower had the name of Jesus and pictures of St. Francis Xavier and St. Ignatius Loyola.

All the Moros’ shouting was preliminary to the actual attack, for they now decided to take the town by storm. All during the 15th and the 16th of July, the Moros were busy constructing machines of various kinds needed for the assault. Twenty-eight moving-towers were constructed, each one on four wooden wheels. Ladders and other implements were made ready. It seemed merely a question of time before Lubungan would be destroyed.
But at sundown of 16 July, with the Moros still feverishly at work, the longed-for aid finally arrived. The people of Dapitan and Dipolog could hear the cannonading all through the previous days and the Jesuit superior in Dapitan decided to organize a relief party to bring food to the Lubungan defenders. They could not come either by sea or through the plain as the Moros were in possession; they had to come by a round-about route through the mountains. As the relief party emerged from the mountain paths and rushed through the back door into Lubungan, the Moro sentinels saw them and raised the alarm. Actually, there were only fifty men in the relief party: but the Moros in the poor light thought that a large relief force had come. The Moros decided to abandon the siege. They retired to their boats and to their stockade by the river that night. The following day they sailed away, some southward towards Zamboanga; others northward, presumably then veering east towards Pangil Bay. But it is possible that some of this attacking force of two thousand men were among the Moros who attacked Tandag, for it was about this time that the Tandag siege began.

The departure of the Moros and the arrival of the relief party were celebrated at Lubungan with tremendous rejoicing. The Te Deum was sung; and the next day they went out to inspect the breastworks and stockades which the Moros had constructed. The Moros had left almost everything behind, except their weapons. They had also left behind some unmarked graves, and some evidence of cremation — at least of clothing (although the chronicler counted three shirts, drenched in blood, which had not been burned).

The victory of Lubungan showed a number of things. First, it showed what a small but determined population could achieve. Second, it showed the importance of having several missions close together for mutual support. Finally, it showed the power and influence that a priest had in time of crisis, and the great trust that the people reposed in him.

The Lubungan victory occurred on 16 July 1754, a day sacred to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in Spanish dominions a day commemorating the "Triumph of the Cross". On that same day, in Iligan, another fighting priest — Father Ducós — formally assumed command of the fleet that would eventually turn the tide against the Moros.