

# The Ateneo Destroyed and Set Free

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Towards the end of January 1945, the Americans after landing at Lingayen, were fast fighting their way to Manila; the Japanese in the city were feverishly throwing up pill-boxes at every street corner; and the Jesuit community at the Ateneo was taking an intensive course in First Aid in preparation for the clash. Heavy machine-gun fire on the north side of the Pasig River brought the course to an abrupt end in the morning of February 3.

The next day, a friend from across the river telephoned us the news that he had seen three American tanks creep towards Malacañang, the President's palace. After this bit of news, the telephone, our last link with the outside world, went dead. But the people of Ermita, which is the district of Manila that immediately surrounded our school, hearing the gunfire, flocked to the Ateneo with their food provisions, their clothes, their pots and pans. For our walls were thick and impregnable to mere street fighting, our grounds were broad against fire, and our church and our religious habits seemed to be the best protection for them against the fury of the vengeful Japanese. So there was a rush of pushcarts through our side gate, and in no time at all, every classroom and laboratory, the refectory, the library, were filled with families — in all, about a thousand persons.

That night there was a huge fire across the river. The Pasig waterfront, for a mile along its length, seemed to be burning all at once. Although we were almost two miles away we could hear the heavy crackling of the flames. Now and then a sheet of flame would shoot up far above the clouds, and five seconds later the sound of an explosion would shake the house and, at times even, blow closed doors from their hinges. The Japanese were blowing up the downtown district with mines.

Two nights later, it was the turn of Intramuros, the Walled City, to be razed to the ground. And so the burning went on, night after night, block after block. The Japanese said they disliked the Filipinos because

they were “double-faced traitors” and, though dressed as civilians, spied upon or shot down Japanese soldiers at every opportunity. And so, for the three years of Filipino hostility and resistance to the Co-Prosperity Sphere, the Japanese were taking revenge.

Shells now began to whistle overhead and to fall a few blocks away. On Wednesday, February 7, there arrived at Assumption College, behind the Ateneo, the Belgian nuns from Saint Theresa’s College. They were joined by the nuns of Saint Paul de Chartres. All were in a high state of nervous excitement. Their colleges had the night before been the target of American guns. They had all received *Viaticum*, and on the morning in question, by a very special pass from the Japanese military authorities, they had been allowed to walk through the streets to a place of safety.

Poor Sisters, they had merely jumped from the frying pan into the fire. The Jesuit scholastics brought them beds and tables, but after that, for two whole weeks, the nuns were swallowed up in a mysterious silence. Although they were our neighbors and the wall separating us had been torn down by the Japanese, we never heard from them again until the Americans came.

On Thursday morning, American planes dropped copies of the *Free Philippines* announcing the capture by the First Cavalry of the internment camp at Santo Tomas and of Malacañang Palace. What a scramble there was for those single-sheets! A man bought a copy from one of our altar boys for fifty pesos.

That noon, a troop of Japanese marines, with fixed bayonets and two machine-guns, went noisily through the house, pulled the people out of their rooms and herded them all into the West Parade grounds. They came to the auditorium, where the Jesuits lived, and forced all the priests, brothers, and scholastics, with their hands in the air, to line up with the rest. Then, one at a time, they searched man, woman and child for concealed weapons or incriminating documents. The reason alleged for the search was that someone from the third floor of our main building had shot at a Japanese sentry on the street. Of course all that the Japs got from the search were some jewels, which they pocketed, and some Commonwealth banknotes (American, hence illegal, currency), which they burned.

The search went for two hours under the noonday sun. One thousand men, women and children stood with their hands up, picketed all

around by rifles and machine-guns. The massacre of civilians was going on all over the city. There was a time when two P-38's started to frolic overhead, wondering perhaps at the immense crowd below. When some eyes were lifted to have a look at them, terrific growls from the guards bent all heads towards the ground once again.

After two hours of this, the senior officer, with a majestic downward sweep of his arm, yelled at the crowd: "Stand!" By this he meant, of course, that we should now sit down. We did. The people finally lowered their tired arms, and stretched out on the grass. Then the officer pointed to his watch and pounded out the words: "Six, all go! Japanese Imperial Army own house!"

It was explained that, as punishment for the attempted murder of the Japanese sentry, and for other military reasons, by the authority of His majesty, the Japanese Emperor, the Army was ordering everybody except the Jesuits to leave the house before six that afternoon. After a long consultation with Father Trinidad, our Rector, the soldiers left.

Thereupon pushcart wheels, which had been removed to prevent theft, were quickly refitted to pushcart axles, and there began the second procession through our side gate, much faster and much sadder than the first.

The second chapter of our story began on Friday, February 9. The main building had been entirely vacated the previous day. The auditorium, which we always called "the church" when speaking with the Japs, was still occupied by the Jesuits. The Blessed Sacrament was reserved there, on the stage. Mass was said there, too.

A little after dinner on this eventful Friday shells began to fall inside the Ateneo grounds for the first time. The first shell struck a tamarind tree, sliced off a branch as thick as a man's leg and blew in the wall of the nearby gymnasium. Other shells came thick and fast, apparently aimed at the chemistry buildings of the University of the Philippines across the street. These buildings finally blew up and burned all afternoon. The smoke was thick and black, pouring over us, filling the sky.

Then we were warned that if anyone stepped out into the streets, he would be shot. A man who had come to draw water at the Ateneo pump tried to return to his house; on leaving the Ateneo he was shot. It was a strategic move on the part of the Japs. Not only was all guerilla activity behind Japanese lines bound hand and foot, not only was the mutual warning of civilians of various districts and all cooperation between

them stifled, but the Japs gained the weapon of mystery. Their numbers seemed to quadruple and they seemed to be everywhere at once.

Shortly before supper, a series of blasts shook the house. The Union Church across the corner had been set on fire. After supper, Father Trinidad, while going around the buildings, saw the Japs carrying straw under the observatory dome. As he approached, they took up their rifles and drove him off. He went to the grotto of the Blessed Virgin and said a *Memorare* for the prevervation of our house that night.

It is said that the Japanese threw gasoline into the grocery store near the Union Church, which they had blasted. Whatever the facts, the fire grew enormously. Then word came that our observatory dome was on fire.

People began to run into the Ateneo from all directions, panic-stricken. But what a strange panic it was! There was no shouting, just men, women and children running and not daring to raise their voices; for they knew well who had started this fire, and they were afraid. Once again, through the side gate into the Ateneo grounds, rolled the lumbering pushcarts.

Priests, scholastics, and lay-brothers went around to the neighboring houses to help the people bring their possessions in. Two scholastics were sent up to the third floor of the main building to watch against the fire. And what a sight they saw! Two immense fires, one to the left and the other in front, were roaring through the homes of once peaceful, beautiful Ermita.

The watchers pointed out the homes of relatives and friends as the fire devoured houses and buildings, towering triumphantly over them. There were, of course, no fire-fighters. Even if there had been any, they would have had no water, no equipment with which to work. The pity of it was that all this destruction was wanton and useless, for neither Americans nor Japanese would profit from it. Perhaps it satisfied the Japanese' thirst for revenge. Certainly it left in its wake, extreme poverty, tears, bitterness.

Besides these fires to the left and in front, to the right the observatory dome was burning. It was a relic of the old Spanish Jesuits who, for half a century, had watched the planets, measured the earthquakes, forecast the typhoons, and kept the records of all these under that dome.

At about ten o'clock a second group of refugees ran in through our front gate. These were in a worse plight than the first group, for besides

having had to travel over a greater distance than the others, and having had to put up much more with the Japanese soldiers they encountered along the way, had been shelled since noon by American guns. They brought in their wounded on beds, the pillows and sheets of which were soaked with blood. The bearers were so unnerved that all they could do was await the approach of one of the Jesuits, and with tears beg for help.

What stories they had to tell! A Chinese person who had been the owner of a restaurant had been caught in his house by the fire. As he was dashing out into the street a soldier blocked his way with a bayonet and drove him back into the flames. "Japanese wanted to make me roasted pig!" he said. With an axe, he broke down his back fence and with some hurdling and clambering made his way to the Ateneo. Two of our altar boys were hiding in an air raid shelter, when an American incendiary shell fell close by and almost asphyxiated them. They fled to the street and joined a band of refugees making their way to the Ateneo. When they came to a barricade, the Japanese sentry would not let them pass and threatened to shoot. Those in the back of the mob shouted: "*Bahala na!* Let them shoot! Go on!" But those in front shouted back: "*You go first!*" The crowd would rush to the barricade and when a few feet away from it, in the face of the sentry's rifle, would run back. Finally they made a wide circle, through back streets, and reached us.

Into the auditorium they all came, until it was packed full, like a circus or a madhouse. There were Chinese people chattering softly; there were four or five women giving birth to their babies before their time. There were pushcarts in the cloister, a horse in the corridor, and cooped up in the toilets there were chickens. In the shadows outside stood soldiers, silent and ominous, with fixed bayonets and steel helmets, camouflaged with nets to look like grass. The road behind the auditorium had been turned into a hospital. By the light of burning Ermita, doctors probed into wounds and operated without anesthetics. Father Trinidad administered the last sacraments.

At about two-thirty in the morning the wind veered, and the fire approached the west side of the Ateneo. A nipa shack standing on that point of our grounds supplied the only possible path of entry for the fire. The scholastics and some volunteers tore this shack down and then watched beside it with fire extinguishers. The fire ate up Saint Joseph's

Dormitory across the street and then passed on. The danger from fire was over for a time.

Just as the Angelus bell was sounding that morning, the scholastics and Father Trinidad crept in under a table to sleep. Their rooms had been commandeered for the use of the Sisters, who had come to us when Saint Joseph's Dormitory was destroyed, as well as of some wounded, and of a woman in labor.

On Saturday morning, February 10, the priests celebrated Mass before that cosmopolitan crowd. The hospital was moved into the auditorium just below the altar. Following the Mass, we took stock of our situation.

About two thousand people had taken refuge at the Ateneo the previous night, and stragglers who still managed to evade the soldiers kept filtering in. Although the city mains had been blown up, our water supply, two pumps and two wells, was adequate. Food was rather short, for a great number had come to us with nothing. For these we had to provide a breadline, or rather a riceline, in which we distributed well-watered rice mixed with cassava, twice a day. Tea for breakfast. In the Jesuit community the saying spread: "Have you drunk breakfast?"

The toilets became a problem, for the people would not take the trouble of drawing water from the well to flush them. The problem was finally solved by means of big posters: "Admission ticket: one bucket of water." For the benefit of the Chinese we translated the posters into cartoons showing a man drawing water from the well, then emptying the bucket into the toilet bowl. The posters and their translations were fastened on the toilet doors, and to make sure the condition of admission was observed, we stationed guards. These and similar precautions were rewarded by freedom from the much feared epidemics. There were only four or five reported cases of dysentery, and only one death from disease.

The men were often drafted by us for labor, such as drawing water for common purposes, cleaning up, burying the dead. One of them, while brandishing a broom, laughed and said: "The Japanese were never able to get me to do forced labor, but see what the Jesuits have done!"

But the Jesuit taskmasters themselves were busy at all sorts of jobs from morning till night, up and about sometimes for twenty hours each day. The wounded could not be brought to a regular hospital, for the Japanese were shooting people on the streets. Nor could they be

carried over our wall to the Philippine General Hospital, which was only a hundred yards away, because snipers were hiding in the trees. So the hospital had to remain in the auditorium, with the scholastics acting as nurses and stretcher-bearers. This little hospital was handicapped by the lack of even the simplest things, like alcohol. This lack was accentuated by the prospect of more casualties, brought home to us by the first incendiary shell that landed next to the auditorium, right where a family was cooking dinner. Some of the burning phosphoric substance seared a man's abdomen. The people scattered, and the man was left wailing and beating the ground with hands and feet until Fr. Trinidad rushed in and stifled the fire with his habit.

This incident emphasized the importance of acquiring more medicines. We instituted a campaign to gather in all the extra drugs, as well as the extra food, which some refugees had brought with them. A German gentleman came forward and offered a large cache of medicines and medical supplies which lay underneath the charred ruins of his house, but we would first have to dig it up. A scholastic, Mr. Lopez, volunteered to try. Taking a Red Cross flag he went out boldly into the streets. He came back with such a large supply of medicines, cotton, gauze, etc. that we never needed any more until the Americans came.

I might here say a word of praise for Mr. Lopez, who must be in heaven now. His work was among the patients in the hospital. His also was the task of burying the dead. It is such a small thing ordinarily, this business of burying of the dead, though even in a time of peace it is viewed as a corporal work of mercy. In time of war, however, bursting shells throw pall-bearers flat on the ground, make grave diggers jump for shelter into the grave they have just dug, and the vast number of the dead makes the work very heavy and saddening. I have started to speak of Mr. Lopez (he was only in his second year philosophy), and I shall have more to say of him later. He had a mother's tenderness towards the wounded, whose faces would literally light up at his approach, and he had a soldier's heart under fire.

Meanwhile, the Japanese around us seemed to grow more and more scarce. However, on Sunday afternoon, February 11, just before benediction, a platoon of Japanese soldiers came in. When they saw the huge crowd assembled in the auditorium, out flew their forty-fives. Once again every one had to file past them to be searched. These Japanese were endlessly suspicious. Yet there was something humorous about

their actions, as for instance, it was funny to see a little boy of eight or nine, so scared his eyes were popping out of his head, raising his little hands as high as they would go, and a stolid Jap searching the little boy lest he could be packing a forty-five in his hip pocket! This time, the Japanese appeared to be in a great hurry, as though someone were chasing them from the south. Even before they had finished the search, they were summoned away by a passing troop. So the people breathed a sign of relief and of thanksgiving to our Lady, the Patroness of the Ateneo, and treated themselves once more to a night's sleep under the auditorium chairs.

Monday, February 12, brought us more shelling from the Americans, who perhaps thought that there were Japanese at the Ateneo. At this time we got a pass from a Japanese medical officer to reoccupy our main building — but only the first floor, lest the incident of the shooting of the Japanese sentry be repeated. A burst of shells on the laboratory buildings sent the survivors scampering to the comparative safety of the main building.

That night, there came two hundred more refugees, a hundred and ninety-nine women and one man. The Japanese had taken their men-folk away, they knew not where. The one male survivor was left behind because his old mother needed someone to carry her. The women had been locked up in Bay View Hotel and were completely at the mercy of the shameless pagans for three days. To tell from their stories, those three days were hell.

But that very night we had our own hell in the main building. The people were sleeping along the corridors, in the classrooms, and in the law library, confident of the protection provided by the three floors above them when *crash!* a shell hit the glass windows of the old law library and scattered shrapnel and glass along the library's entire length. For half an hour after that massacre we were carrying the wounded into the auditorium to be sewn up by the doctors. The dead we merely covered up with old clothes.

We woke up Father Riera, an old Spanish veteran of the missions. He had his own way of throwing on the habit, quick as a fireman. He came to the wounded and gave them absolution and extreme unction.

Half an hour later into the auditorium was carried another batch of broken skulls and sliced thighs. Another shell had burst upon the refugees. On went the habit of Father Riera, and he was at work even



before the doctors could start. There was no sleep that night for the doctors and nurses.

There was not much variety in the shelling after this. A friend came to the Ateneo begging help for some refugees two blocks away. A scholastic, waving a Red Cross flag, ventured out to rescue them, and brought them to the Ateneo. But after experiencing a night's shelling at the Ateneo, they decided they could not stand our little madhouse; they left the Ateneo to live like rats in the ruins.

A strange incident involving this rescue expedition transpired when, passing through the Assumption College behind the Ateneo, they called out to the Sisters, but received no answer. The Sisters and everyone else in the house had disappeared. We learned later that all the occupants had been forced into the basement of a little house, with the Japanese threatening to throw in a hand grenade if so much as a baby cried.

By now the shells were smashing into the side of the auditorium. To minimize the risk to themselves, the scholastics slept, on the night of Tuesday, Feb. 13, in the main building in the small recess over the old college store. All through the night shells were blowing off the roof of the house, splintering the third story. Sometimes bits of shrapnel would sizzle down through four floors and hit the ground with a thump. But the nine of us in the little ten-by-six attic were sufficiently cozy with a pile of furniture on the floor above us, concrete walls all around, and a telescope pier ten feet thick behind us.

But elsewhere we were not always so secure. "Close shaves" became common. A 105 mm. shell once crashed through the ceiling of the auditorium and fell a foot away from two of us, but it failed to explode. Another scholastic walked in the line of machine-gun fire; but the bullets merely picked up the folds of his habit and twisted a case for a pair of eyeglasses which he carried in his pocket. Our former rooms were made to look like sieves, but of course we were away during the process. It was after some such experiences, when the uncomfortable neighborliness of death could no longer be denied, that the scholastics started singing to each other that Negro spiritual learned in previous years from American scholastics:

"If you get to heaven before I do,  
Just bore a hole and pull me through . . ."

On the morning after our night's stay in the small attic, another scholastic and I were caught by shelling beside the altar on the auditorium stage. We jumped back to a side wall and flattened ourselves against it. The first shells exploded right under the roof and blew it off. When the roof was gone, the shells tore through the opening and exploded among the altar curtains. Down crashed the curtains, the cables, the lights, the whole cyclorama. The tabernacle was never hit, though we could see the bronze altar vases flying about like bowling pins. The base of a shell struck the floor at our feet. It seemed like the last hour for us. We took out a rosary, kissed the crucifix for the indulgence at the hour of death, said "Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I give you my heart and my soul" and waited for the "sharp nail" that was to bore through us. But when we opened our eyes again, we were still alive.

Every new escape from death added a new zest to life, and filled it with new meaning; Almighty God was still in perfect control of all things, and His care for us could be counted on to "proceed according to plan."

On February 14, Ash Wednesday, the main Ateneo building was reduced to ashes. That morning the barrage of shells had been extraordinarily heavy. People were struck while running from one building to another, and the path leading from the main building to the auditorium was lined with dead. Besides our own wounded, more were brought in from the Elena Apartments; so many were they that the Jesuits were using their cinctures for bandages. It became impossible to cook in the kitchen. There was no breakfast and hardly any dinner, save for the few canned goods that had been carefully kept for three years for just such an emergency.

In the midst of this horrible shelling, at about one-thirty, there was a cry of fire. Smoke was seen coming from the west tower of the main building. A scholastic ran up to the shell-shattered third floor where he had to pick his way cautiously to the tower. But it was a false alarm. The smoke was from a burning house across the street and was merely being blown towards the tower by the wind.

At about three o'clock there came another cry of fire. This time smoke was pouring from the central tower, accompanied by the crackling of fire. The same scholastic ran up with a fire extinguisher to the third floor. Sure enough, the ceiling was on fire. Almost before he could invert the extinguisher, the flames had danced about like three or four

colossal lizards all over the dormitory ceiling. Down he fled, leaving the extinguisher to shoot its contents out in vain.

What followed is a tribute to the discipline St. Ignatius imposes on his sons. While the mob charged for the two rear doors, Father Rector and the Jesuits present hurried to the rooms where the wounded were lying. The front door was locked; it was immediately decided there was no time to break it open. The back doors were open, but by now were choked by the panic-stricken crowd. So through the former chapel, through the sacristy, and out through the little side-door to safety the Jesuits carried the patients, then back again for more; they worked steadily until the cinders started to drop on them from the burning floor above. Ultimately only one of the wounded, a Chinese woman, could not be brought out in time and had to be abandoned to the flames.

Meanwhile, the back doors were choked with a crowd, shouting, pushing, but hardly moving forward. Some of the people had tried to bring their pushcarts, loaded with their belongings, through, and these now jammed the doors. Men, women and children were thrown flat on those pushcarts, and more and more were thrown over these until the pile of bodies reached up to half the height of the door. One scholastic was caught in the middle of that pile, and he had fifteen breathless minutes, with arms and legs above him, and arms and legs and corpses below him, while a solicitous mother trying to pull out her son by the leg heard a strange voice from the pile saying "That's my leg, ma'am."

But when the people were out of the building, and the bodies, living and dead, had been pulled out of the pile, there arose the other problem of where to house the refugees. The auditorium was a wreck, the grounds were being pock-marked with shells: there seemed to be only one place of refuge, the Philippine General Hospital. So it was decided to brave the snipers, to break down the wall separating the Ateneo from the Hospital, and to transfer the refugees there. Three of Ours were to go with the refugees, the rest would stay a while in the auditorium.

With the use of a pickaxe, the wall was breached. The people ran across to the maternity ward. The snipers got a few, but the great majority reached the hospital in safety. One man was hit in the abdomen by a Japanese bullet. I saw him being wheeled down the ward shouting that he would have his revenge. As for the rest who after those nerve-racking sixty minutes found themselves poorer perhaps but alive, they were almost mad with relief and joy. They kissed the hands of the Jesu-

its they met, they pulled out their beads and said rosary after rosary in thanksgiving for their deliverance.

However, the hospital itself was not too secure: two wards had been burned, shells had fallen in others. There was only one pump for artesian water, and whoever worked that pump did so at the risk of his life, because Japanese snipers watched it like hunters at a waterhole and now and then took potshots at those who dared to draw. Some of the refugees preferred to stay at the Ateneo, either in the auditorium with us or in the air-raid shelters on the grounds.

That Wednesday night, Assumption College also was set on fire. The flying cinders, carried by the wind, kept coming in through the holes in the auditorium roof and falling on the ruined altar.

Up to now the Jesuits had escaped all serious injury. But around midnight, while one of the lay-brothers, Brother Rumbaoa, was going downstairs, shell fragments hit him in the face and cut an artery in his thigh. The same barrage, it seems, also killed the scholastic, Mr. Pimentel, though we did not discover this fact till late next morning. The discovery came about this way. At dawn we told Mr. Lopez, our scholastic chief-undertaker, "A Chinese person was killed in the foyer. Don't miss him."

At about ten o'clock, a scholastic came in, all pale, and shouted, "Mr. Pimentel is dead!" He was the "Chinese man" in the foyer whose brains had been dashed out. His habit being pulled up and bloody, he could not be easily recognized as a Jesuit. He had been killed in his sleep. Even as we were discussing his death, conjecturing on the hour it happened, commenting on how he had received general absolution with us on the previous day and on how similar a Jesuit was in death to anyone else, the laboratory buildings were set on fire, apparently by some Japanese soldiers whom we could see roaming about on the grounds. We simply let them burn.

As the auditorium began to seem too dangerous, Father Trinidad decided to split the community and to keep as few as possible at the Ateneo, just enough to take care of the wounded who could not be moved, and to distribute food to the two hundred or so refugees who remained within the premises. So at about noon three priests, three scholastics and five lay-brothers were left to hold the fortress, with the rest, taking with them some of the wounded (the Philippine General

Hospital would not take in more than fifteen), crossing through the breach in the wall to the Hospital. This was on Thursday, February 15.

We who were left behind settled down to the shelling that now came in sporadic bursts. When we could hear the whistle before the explosion, we would relax, for that meant that the shell was for some other unfortunate beyond our block. But those short-whistling or whistleless explosions! They were meant for us. So savage were these sporadic outbursts and so seemingly malicious in their intent to harass that we thought it could not be the Americans but the Japanese who were shelling us. This terrifying thought seemed to be corroborated by the fact that although thousands of Filipinos had been killed in Ermita we never saw a single Japanese killed by shelling; they were too well hidden in their own concrete buildings to be reached by ordinary shells.

On Thursday night, into the auditorium came a band of Japanese soldiers, carrying a box loaded with what looked like dynamite. As they came in, we prepared to go out, for besides our fear that they would burn the auditorium over our heads, we were anxious for the women. That very morning some women had run back to the Ateneo from the Hospital to seek protection from their pagan lusts.

So when they came in, we started quietly to carry our food supplies to a place of safety; the women were waiting for us to conduct them to the dug-outs outside. However at the last minute Father Trinidad was able to come to an understanding with the officer in command, who promised that the women would not be touched, and asked for nothing more than a night's lodging. So we returned to the auditorium, to sleep that night with one eye open.

Four o'clock Friday morning we saw a red glow lighting up the tiny projection room windows in the rear ceiling of the auditorium. Were the Japanese soldiers after all trying to burn us? Mr. Lopez and I ran upstairs with a fire extinguisher. A shell had landed in the movie projection room, had blown out the doors and the ceiling, and set the papers and trunks stored there on fire.

We emptied the extinguisher into the fire, but it was insufficient to put it out. We went downstairs and dragged up another fire extinguisher, but again it was not enough. In our despair we hammered the fire with our empty extinguishers, but the violence was wasted and the fire burned on as merrily as ever.

Then we went down to get help. Several Chinese persons, at our excited urging, took up their pails and went to the well to draw water. They kept on drawing water from the well and sand from the tennis courts, lugging the pails up three stories to us, who then attacked the fire from two sides, outflanked it, surrounded it, and put it out.

As we were finishing, someone noticed that the rafters had caught fire. Just as a young man climbed up to the roof to pour water on them from above, a shell crashed down, missing his head by a couple of feet, and missing our toes by about the same distance. It went through the third floor and on the second it exploded sending bits of shrapnel up at us again through the third floor. Fortunately none of us upstairs was seriously hurt; downstairs however a lay-brother, Brother Duffy, was wounded in the back.

A little while later, almost before we had time to run downstairs, there came a terrific barrage that blew our makeshift kitchen into bits. Mr. Andaya, who was helping near the kitchen caught some shell pieces in his side and in his lip, two teeth being knocked out. His wounds must have hurt terribly, but this little stoic (he had studied medicine before he entered the Society and was, at the time, our infirmarian) spat out what remained of the two teeth, gave instructions on how to tie up his wounds, then asked for a cigarette.

After bandaging the wounded, we made preparations for that Friday morning's Mass. We set up a little altar in the washroom, which seemed to be the safest spot at the time. In one corner sat the wounded scholastic, still bleeding slowly. In the other corner were the nuns from St. Joseph's Dormitory. The place was so small that the server during Mass hardly moved from where he stood. All received *Viaticum*, which brought to tired hearts new strength and new optimism.

One of our priests then took the Blessed Sacrament from the main altar to the Philippine General Hospital for safety. Another left with a lay-brother for the Elena Apartments.

That afternoon Mr. Lopez and I, taking a Red Cross flag, also went to the Elena Apartments to see if we could transfer some of our wounded thither. On the way we met a squad of Japanese soldiers slinking through a hole in the wall; they had the air of children playing hide-and-seek. They did not mind us at all. We reached the Elena Apartments in safety but were disappointed to find their Red Cross station still unorganized

and lacking in that centralization of authority which was the mark of our little "theocratic" state and was the source of whatever efficiency we had. So we returned to our "fortress," bringing back with us a surgeon and a nurse to examine our wounded, especially Mr. Andaya, whose wound was intermittently bleeding.

As the lull in the shelling continued, we took advantage of it to bury Mr. Pimentel and the other corpses, some of which had been dead for three days. It was done in a hurry; three or four corpses were dragged into a dugout, and a pretense was made of covering them with sand. After covering up the seventh corpse this way with about twenty more waiting, a nearby shell explosion made us leap into a dugout and then run for our lives to our fortress, leaving the twenty to wait for better times.

That Friday night, a fire started up again in the movie-projection room, and the tiresome process of drawing water and hauling it up three stories had to be gone through again. It was worse this time as our helpers were hesitant about drawing water amidst the whistling shrapnel, unless we were there with them to lend moral support. One poor boy broke down and sobbed that he was afraid to go on. Mr. Lopez told him kindly to take a rest; after a while he became so ashamed of himself that he came back and worked twice as hard as the rest. We finally soaked the room so thoroughly that the fire had not a chance of starting again.

Breakfast on Saturday morning, the first breakfast in many days, was the previous night's left-over rice with some bits of dried fish. No king ever ate so costly a breakfast, for calculating on the last quoted prices of twenty-seven thousand pesos per cavan of rice, each mouthful must have cost some thirty or forty pesos. The diet of fish was priceless.

On this Saturday occurred the "empty hospital mystery," a strange happening which kept us guessing for a couple of days. Since there was with us a wounded man who, the doctor said, would die unless immediately brought to the Philippine General Hospital, a lay-brother with some volunteers carried him there on a bed, across the wall. This took place at about eleven o'clock in the morning.

That afternoon, there was another patient who had to be carried across. He was a Swiss, a heavy man. With the intention of also visiting our brothers in the hospital, Mr. Lopez and I, preceded by a volunteer carrying a huge Red Cross flag, carried him through the breach in the wall. But we found no one at the hospital; the wards were all silent and

empty — no doctors, no patients, no refugees, not even the lay-brother and those who had gone there that morning. Where could they have gone? Mr. Lopez said he saw a Japanese soldier in one of the wards. So without further ado we took up our patient and carried him back to the Ateneo.

The disappearance of the refugees, including the Jesuits, from the hospital was a great mystery to us. Had they all been killed? Had they been transferred elsewhere by the Japanese? Had they fled? It certainly was strange that about seven thousand people could disappear without a trace. Only after the Americans came did we learn what had happened.

Meanwhile, the parish priest of Ermita with his coadjutor and some parishioners passed by the Ateneo on their way from the air-raid shelter at the church to the hospital. The grass is always greener on the other side of the road, and the house next door is always shelled less than one's own. They said that they had not seen a single Jap on the streets. This also was very strange. Hearing the account of what we had seen in the hospital they decided to stay with us for the night.

That night Father Trinidad and the two of us scholastics said the beads sitting in the darkness of his room. Then we went to confession to him, and after confession Mr. Lopez said: "Now we are ready for anything!" He was only giving expression to the tense atmosphere of "something-about-to-happen" that night. He did not realize that the next day he would be shot and killed.

The barrage of shells was at its worst. Shells exploded outside, ten feet away from the building, and the shrapnel crashed through the closed door, missing by inches us who crouched on either side.

Once after a furious burst, we heard shouting outside: "Padre, Padre!" It was the Swiss patient, whom we had tried to bring that afternoon to the hospital. He had been unable to stand the stench of the auditorium, and preferred to stay under a shelter outside. We went to the window and called "What is it?" The answer came "Baldly hit, Padre, badly hit!"

For ten minutes we waited, crouching, for the barrage to end. Then we rushed outside. On our path lay a woman with a bleeding abdomen; we carried her in. Then we went back to the Swiss. We called and there was no answer: he was dead, and the family that had been taking care



of him had also been wiped out by the shells. We left them, thinking we could do nothing; next day, however, from that wreckage the Sisters were to pick up a six-months-old baby, unscratched and even cooing.

Meanwhile, the number of wounded was mounting, and the nuns and ourselves were kept busy running from one case to another, lining them all up along the auditorium wall. A pessimist standing by told a nun: "Sister, do not use up so much bandage. Save some, you will get many more wounded tonight." But the Sister kept right on being generous. She would not advertise, of course, that she had been tearing up her white habits into strips for bandages.

The shelling grew worse as Saturday night wore on. At about two-thirty o'clock in the morning Father Trinidad said "Let's get out of here." So we called the nuns and brought them over to the ruins of the main building. There the old Laundry Room, though burned and piled with debris, still retained a solid concrete roof.

Just then we saw fire leaping up from one side of the auditorium stage. Faster we worked to save our foodstuffs, our altar goods, and our patients. These last were a pitiful lot. One, with a bullet in his chest, kept repeating in the dialect, "Father, do not leave me. You are my only hope." Another in her terror crawled out to the auditorium runway, and could go no further. We picked them all up and deposited them in the ruined Laundry.

When we could do nothing more, we sat down and watched the auditorium burn. It was our last fortress. It had been our dormitory, our dining room, our study hall, our parlor and church for the last five months and through the most taxing days. We watched it burn and waited for Sunday's dawn.

Just then, there passed by us a platoon of Japanese soldiers, all silent, they looking at us, we looking at them. Our people held their breath while the soldiers marched by; when they were out of hearing, they let out a flow of all the bad names in the English, Spanish, and Tagalog dictionaries.

Then came Mass. It was memorable, this Mass at dawn, with refugees, haggard and weeping, kneeling amidst the ruins and hanging on to every action of the celebrant, while the flames in the auditorium sizzled quietly away.

After Mass we said, "Let us have a little celebration before we die." The evening before, an incendiary shell had burst near our cow. Her

udder and side were badly burned. To save her we invested two cans of margarine and rubbed her burned parts. If she lived until the next day, well and good, if she died, we would have fresh beef for dinner.

The good cow did not die. But she had a calf, and in God's Providence, the calf was hit by a shell the next morning and her head was torn from her body. The poor mother cow was licking the calf when we found them. We took the little calf and had a big combination dinner-breakfast of rice and fresh veal.

While we were enjoying this dinner and trying to cheer each other up, a man came into the laundry and said: "Father, I swear I saw five Americans. And they said to me: 'Hello, Joe, where are the Japs?' And I said to them 'In the Union Church' and pointed to them the way. Father, I swear it is true!"

An hour later a Russian lady came in saying she too had spoken with the Americans.

Then at about three o'clock in the afternoon, news came that two American tanks were in Assumption College grounds, their crews resting. On hearing this, Father Trinidad went over to Assumption. He came back a changed man, beaming and laughing. "I shook their hands," he said. "I asked them to come and take the Ateneo, but they said they had no orders to do so. They promised that we would not be shelled any more."

Many people then went over to Assumption to see the tanks or to stay there for greater security. Mr. Lopez also went with two lay-brothers. We waited for them to come back. Supper came, and they were not yet in; at bedtime there was still no Mr. Lopez. We did not know that he was at that moment lying in an emergency hospital, mortally wounded. He had been shot by a Japanese sniper at Assumption.

Next day, Monday, February 19, the guerrillas and the American main lines arrived at the Ateneo. The civilians were advised to go behind the American lines. Our refugees left immediately, but we could not move, for those among the wounded who had no friends were still on our hands. A little later our difficulty was solved. Out of the Assumption grounds came two scholastics with Red Cross bands on their arms, and an empty stretcher on their shoulders. What joy it was to see our brothers again. They brought news. The people in Philippine General Hospital had been freed by American tanks on the noon of the previous Saturday, and everyone had been taken away on trucks. There was

the solution of our "empty hospital mystery." La Ignaciana, our Novitiate, was still standing, and there beds were prepared and showers (!) were waiting for us. Mr. Lopez had been shot through the spinal cord, his legs were paralyzed, and he was dying in the Mandaluyong Hospital.

They took away the remaining wounded on their stretcher, making five trips through sniper-ridden territory, once carrying as many as three persons on the stretcher in one trip. At noon everyone had left the ruins except Brother Duffy and myself and a boy. We were to await the truck that would come to take away the things we had salvaged. But the truck did not come and we were obliged to hold on for another night — almost to our undoing.

That night, there was a battle at the Ateneo. I was awakened by a piece of shrapnel grazing my knee without cutting it. Machine guns were firing all over the grounds. Brother Duffy and I crept to opposite corners and waited. Then we heard the sounds of a man stumbling over the ruins. Then, "plop-plop, plop-plop"; he was firing his pistol. In the terrific reply came the crash of American machine-guns. The man stepped into the laundry where we were hidden in the darkness; he waited a little while, then he stepped out and fired again. The machine-guns roared again. There was a fall, groans, then silence. Next morning there were fifteen or sixteen dead Japanese soldiers all over the grounds, and a dead Japanese officer on the Laundry steps. The Americans took his Luger, his wrist-watch and two more watches which the Jap had wrapped up in his pocket. Brother Duffy took his belt, which he wore for a long time after that.

Later that morning, we received orders from Father Trinidad to quit the Ateneo. So we left our ruined fortress and proceeded to the Novitiate at La Ignaciana, where it stands on the banks of the softly flowing Pasig. But, of course, as we were leaving the ruins, we said to each other: "We shall return!" For God willing, no one shall keep the Ateneo down, and the fortress from its ashes shall one day rise again. And, indeed, it has! 