

Political Collaboration during the Japanese Occupation of Negros Oriental: The Case of Representative Jose E. Romero

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ABSTRACT

This study is part of a series of articles on the political collaboration issue in Negros Oriental among known political elites. More specifically, it discusses the collaboration case of Jose E. Romero, 2nd District Representative of Negros Oriental during World War II, to determine whether he was an *active* or a *passive* collaborator. A very perspicacious official, Romero collaborated tactically with the Japanese as proven by his experiences and dealings with the Japanese forces. As a study on local history, this research relied mainly on primary documents culled

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from Romero's autobiography, *Not So Long Ago: A Chronicle of My Life, Times, and Contemporaries*, and other works written by members of the resistance movement. Based on the pieces of evidence presented, it is unequivocally clear that Romero's form of collaboration was a *passive* one, more indicatively a *tactical* form of collaboration. He did not want any clear-cut association or involvement with the Japanese, thus worked his way around any difficult situation.

KEYWORDS

Jose E. Romero, Japanese occupation of Negros Oriental, political collaboration, World War II, collaborators, local history of Negros Oriental

INTRODUCTION

The issue of political collaboration has been examined in detail at the national level. There are many studies on collaborationism at the national level but only a few of them delve into the local level.¹ On collaboration at the local level, Satoshi Ara wrote an article on the collaboration of Mayor Catalino Hermosilla, wartime mayor of Ormoc, Leyte. Seemingly, Hermosilla's form of collaboration with the enemy was quite unique—he used it to gain leverage over them. Ara inferred that this was done through the creation of the Home Guard which was purportedly used by Hermosilla to maintain peace and order. However, it became obvious that its creation was to help increase

Hermosilla's influence and gradually extirpate his political rivals. "Apparently..." as Ara averred, "his chosen political stance was nothing but to protect his vested interests while ostensibly being cooperative with the Japanese."² Ara's study on Hermosilla vividly depicts collaboration at the local level and how it is quite different from collaboration at the national level. The motives of local collaborators indeed vary from one place to another, depending on the province or town's political milieu. Hence, there is no general or common motive as to why and how the Filipino collaborators worked with the Japanese. Again, the collaborators' experiences differ, hence a study on several collaborators is essential to prevent any hasty generalizations about their actions.

This paper looks into the collaboration of Jose E. Romero who was at his prime as a young politician, but was faced with a tremendous challenge in dealing with the Japanese forces. His dealings with the Japanese were to a large extent quite unique, thus, it is crucial to look into it in detail to determine whether he was an active collaborator who persistently believed in the views of the Japanese, or a passive collaborator who was working perfunctorily with the Japanese and was in reality playing a double game by working surreptitiously with the guerrilla movement.

ROMERO DURING THE EARLY MONTHS OF THE WAR

Jose E. Romero's wartime collaboration experience with the Japanese is a story worthy to be retold. His collaboration with the Japanese or the manner in which

he went or played along with the enemy makes him the most perspicacious government official in Negros Oriental during his time.



Jose E. Romero as a Representative of the 2nd District of Negros Oriental.
From Ikay Villanueva Collection.

Albeit born in Bais, Romero was a native Tanjayanon. Like many other politicians during his time, he was a member of the political elite. His father, Francisco Romero Sr., who worked with the Bais Sugar Central, was active in politics, serving as mayor of Tanjay from 1909 to 1916 and provincial board member thereafter. His mother was Josefa Muñoz who also belonged to a political family as her father, Don Jose Teves Muñoz, was once a *gobernadorcillo* of Tanjay. Romero was a product of both Silliman University and the University of the Philippines. He finished his Bachelor of Laws at UP in 1922, then returned to Negros Oriental to practice law. It did not take long before he decided to enter politics in 1925. He was elected as a member of

the provincial board of Negros Oriental. Then he was re-elected in 1928 to the same post.³ As was expected from a brilliant lawyer and young politician, Romero chose to climb the ladder of politics and became a member of the House of Representative in 1931. He served the House of Representatives for five consecutive terms from 1931 to 1946. Due to his “parliamentary ability,” he was chosen by colleagues in Congress to become floor leader from 1934 to 1936.⁴

Suffice it to say, his long stint in Congress made him a close friend of President Manuel L. Quezon and the rest of the political elites in the Philippines.

After hearing the news on Pearl Harbor, and before the Japanese could arrive in Manila, Romero and other government officials scrambled to return to their respective provinces. They were desperate to leave Manila as they wanted to be with their families and their constituents. Air trips going to the provinces were scarce, so their only resort was to travel by boat. This decision almost cost Romero his life when he boarded the ill-fated *SS Corregidor* on 17 December 1941. The ship departed from Manila and sank as it traversed the mined area near Corregidor and mainland Manila Bay. As Romero recalled the incident, there were signals coming from Corregidor warning the ship captain of the mines. The captain was unaware that he was sailing through a dangerous passage and almost immediately there was “a dull thud and then an explosion.”⁵ The ship sank rapidly, bringing with her to the depths more than a thousand innocent lives, which included prominent lawmakers like Representatives Juan M. Reyes (from

Capiz), Atanacio Ampig (from Iloilo), and former Senator Hermenegildo Villanueva (from Negros Oriental).⁶ The tragedy shocked Quezon. He was devastated by the sheer loss of lives and saddened by the news that some of his close friends in politics were among the victims.⁷

Luckily, another close compatriot of Quezon—i.e., Romero—escaped from the sinking ship and managed to swim to the shore, where he was rescued by an American soldier. He was subsequently brought to the hospital in Corregidor and later to Manila where his head wound was treated.

RETURN TO NEGROS ORIENTAL

The longer Romero stayed in Manila, the more eager he was to return to his hometown. The wait was agonizing for Romero as he constantly thought about his family; especially his wife who was taking care of their children. Aside from his family, he was also worried sick about the possibility that the Japanese Imperial Army (especially the *Kempeitai*) would discover his prewar speeches. In his speeches, Romero proposed for the postponement of Philippine independence due to the growing threat of Japan in the region. This was a pro-American stance, but apart from this, the speeches also contained topics on Japanese atrocities in Korea, China, and other places which they occupied. As a result, Romero had to do damage control before the Japanese could get hold of the speeches. Together with his secretary, he went to his office at the National Assembly and took as many copies as they could, and brought them to his house.⁸

The fall of Bataan, during this time, was imminent. Subsequently, Romero and some assemblymen were summoned by a certain Japanese colonel who informed them of their mission to accompany the Japanese invading forces to Cebu. This was a chance for Romero to be closer to his family back in Dumaguete, but he was uncomfortable and apprehensive about accompanying the Japanese invading forces. That being said, he along with another Congressman (Rep. Juan Alano from Zamboanga) tried their best to explain and convince the Japanese officer that “invading the southern islands was the work of the military and that once those islands were under Japanese control, we would extend our cooperation toward pacifying our home provinces.”⁹ This was the concession that Romero made in order not to alienate the guerrillas, as joining an occupying/invading Japanese army to Cebu would obviously make him all the more an active collaborator. He also sounded convincing to the Japanese officer, and since the Japanese forces had to play a policy of attraction at the outset, the mere notion of helping in the pacification campaign in Romero’s own province, i.e., Negros Oriental, seemed reasonable enough to grant his request.

Afterwards, with the help of his friend from Bogo, Cebu, and after six months of being away from his hometown, Romero boarded a boat from Lucena to Bogo, which took around 10 days’ travel. From Bogo, he traveled to Cebu City and thereafter went along with another friend who was returning to Bais through Ginatilan. Then they rode a small boat (*baroto*) across Tanon Strait to Bais.¹⁰ Romero arrived in Bais around midnight and stayed at the house of his friend, Representative Julian Teves. The

next day he met his family and was happy to know that everything was copacetic with them. The following day, he was accompanied by Rep. Teves and Governor Villanueva to Dumaguete, as the Japanese had been inveterately asking about the whereabouts of Romero.

ROMERO'S TACTICAL COLLABORATION

Romero had nothing to worry about in Dumaguete. Most of his friends in the local government had already collaborated with the Japanese. He also had a letter directly from Jorge Vargas (chairman of the Executive Commission) stating that he was to participate in the pacification campaign in Negros Oriental. His friends in the national government (e.g., Jorge Vargas, Benigno Aquino Sr., etc.) also vouched for him or had his back in times when the Japanese doubted him. Thus, when he met the Japanese commander in Dumaguete, he was immediately given duties for the pacification of Negros Oriental.

Romero's first task was to convince a certain American, Mr. William Bryant, who was the manager of a large coconut plantation in the Bais-Pamplona area, to return to the occupied area. Mr. Bryant retreated to the hinterlands when the Japanese arrived in Negros Oriental. He was previously the appointed Governor of Palawan at the start of the American occupation. The main reason why the Japanese wanted him to return to the occupied area was for him to be closely monitored and controlled. The Japanese saw him as a potential threat in organizing a resistance movement. Romero considered this as a herculean task. He was too weak to trek through the mountains (given that he

previously had an injury from the *SS Corregidor* tragedy). Again, the Japanese were convinced by his explanation and chose another collaborator, provincial board member Jose Martinez.¹¹ In the end, Martinez persuaded Mr. Bryant along with his companions to come down to the occupied areas. Mr. Bryant, Martinez said, wanted to meet with Romero before surrendering to the Japanese commander in Dumaguete. During their meeting, Romero recalled that he and Mr. Bryant mainly discussed the “developments of the war in the future” and the inevitability of America’s return to the Philippines. According to Romero, it was a conversation which was “really among people who were all loyal to the cause of the Americans and Filipinos.”¹² This reflected the motivations of Romero—he was a collaborator who was loyal to the Americans and Filipinos, and was merely waiting for the return of the Americans.

According to Alice Bryant—the wife of William Bryant—her husband was brought to the provincial headquarters of the Japanese located along the boulevard and was met by a certain Lieutenant Hosatani (in lieu of the provincial commander, Captain Tsuda). Lieutenant Hosatani told Bryant that he and his party would be interned temporarily in a Dumaguete hospital. Mr. Bryant did not seem to like the idea and tried to bargain if they could stay in the mountains as, according to him, “we are not doing a thing you could possibly object to.”¹³

But the Japanese did not budge and assured Mr. Bryant that his family would be taken care of, that they would open schools, and that perhaps sooner or later, they would be allowed to go back to their plantation.¹⁴

The local politicians who were present during that time, including Romero, seemed powerless as they could not do anything to help Mr. Bryant's plea to stay in his plantation.

Romero's second task was the pacification of his hometown, Tanjay. In 1943, as part of the pacification campaign, he organized and led the Tanjay's Neighborhood Association which was a familial organization "composed of around five to 15 families." Its mandate was for the locals' "self-protection under joint responsibility," that is to say, it was a way of protecting the local inhabitants from any danger. However, this association was mainly used for "tracking down the movements of guerrillas or any anti-Japanese individuals."¹⁵ By and large, Romero regarded this task as "uneventful and almost a pleasant one."¹⁶

Surprisingly, he was not threatened by the guerrillas within the area as they trusted him and did not consider him as an enemy. Romero aptly described the guerrillas' perception of him as follows:

The guerrillas who were deployed around Pamplona had been good friends of mine and knew me perfectly well as a man *loyal to the cause*, and they could not forget that only a few years previously, I had been delivering diatribes against the Japanese atrocities in the territories in Asia that they occupied, and they concluded that *I was only trying to help the civilians*.¹⁷

Indeed, nothing bad happened to Romero while he was in Tanjay, even when he was conducting other

pacification campaigns around Negros Oriental. By January 1944, he was temporarily appointed as acting Governor of Negros Oriental and, together with Assemblyman Julian Teves and Senior Inspector Bautista, were present in Tanjay and Bais to explain and convince the guerrillas and civilians to return to the occupied areas. The pacification campaign grew more active during this time, with the local collaborators using President Laurel's Proclamation No. 2, which declared "amnesty and pardon to all guerrilla groups and those helping them in the mountains," as their tool to induce the guerrillas and their supporters to

January 17, 1944

To All Usaffe Remnants

On October 14, 1943, President Laurel issued Proclamation No. 2 declaring Amnesty and Pardon to all guerilla groups and those helping them in the mountains. Please know that the purpose of this, is simply to convince you of his great desire to build up a new and strong Philippines and to help you take away from your minds all semblance of American influence. The invitation is extended heartily for you to help us build our New Republic founded on morality and justice.

We have already spoken publicly thrice in Dumaguete, December 29, 1943, January 1, 1944 and January 15, 1944. We have also spoken at the market place in Sibulan on December 12th, at the Municipal Building in Bais on December 17th and in Tanjay on December 19, 1943. Acting Governor Romero, Assemblyman Teves and Senior Inspector Bautista are now in Tanjay and Bais to explain to you the need for you and the civilians to come down and take advantage of this proclamation of our President for Amnesty and Pardon.

To Dauin, Inspector Villamater had gone with his men to bring this same message, with corn, sugar for the indigents but on their way back, you ambushed them. We have given enough notice that we don't want you to die where you are. The Imperial Japanese Forces are already here but they want you still to come down because the innocent ones may also die. We will be in Luzuriaga, January 18th Bacong on January 20, and Amblan on January 22, 1944, to explain again to you this Presidential proclamation of Amnesty and Pardon. If you wish to meet us in these places, please advise us. We will be glad to welcome you in any of these towns. Rest assured you will not be hurt. The Commander of Oriental Negros, the Honorable Nobu-taro Kawada, guarantees your safety.

Join with us in this program of reconstruction for a NEW PHILIPPINES and I wish you Prosperous and Happy New Year.

Very respectfully yours,

G. Z. VILLANUEVA
Governor of Negros Oriental

G.Z. Villanueva, "To All Usaffe Remnants," 17 January 1944.
Found in R.B. Silliman World War II Papers, FN 86,
Silliman University Library, Dumaguete City.

come down.¹⁸ Oddly, Romero was one of the collaborators whom the guerrillas did not detest. This was not because of his many connections, but because of his *political adroitness*. He knew his way around; he knew how to deal with the Japanese that would not make him a target by the guerrillas. A concrete example of his political adroitness was the manner by which he dissociated himself from the Japanese that made the guerrillas fully understand his main motive for collaborating.

He wrote in his autobiography:

The old-time Japanese civilian already referred to as liaison between the army and Filipino civilians told the Japanese soldiers that I was a good speaker in the dialect and so I was used as an *interpreter* on (*sic*) most of their occasions. This was how I avoided expressing my own ideas. I translated the speeches of the Japanese with words '*they say*' and '*according to them*' (the Japanese). When this was transmitted to the guerrilla leaders, they saw the point very clearly and everybody was commenting that *I never expressed my own ideas but clearly showed that I was only interpreting the statements of the Japanese*. This was [*sic*] favorably impressed the guerrillas and most of them had friendly feelings toward me.¹⁹

The method in which Romero dissociated himself from the Japanese was subtle and discreet. It was not conspicuous to the Japanese, but the guerrillas were able to understand it. Another innovative way of showing to the

guerrillas that he was loyal to the Filipino and American cause was when he wrote letters to Robert B. Silliman who was in the hinterlands and was Deputy Governor of Negros Oriental and Siquijor. To prevent any complications with the Japanese, Romero chose to write on a piece of paper using lemon juice. According to him, by using lemon juice “the writing would not be visible but when placed in water, the writing would show.”²⁰ For Romero, it was very important to be prudent during those difficult times. This was one characteristic which was lacking among the other local collaborators. Reflecting on his shrewdness during the war, Romero recalled that:

In my communications with Mr. Silliman and perhaps one or two others in the mountains, we agreed that there was to be no address and signature, as the courier would make this evident enough. When I received communications from other friends with their address and signature, I separated the message from the address and signature and placed the address and signature at the back of separate picture frames so that later, the parts could be pieced together. Had many of my good friends observed some kind of prudence like this, many useful lives might have been saved in the reconstruction of the country after the war.²¹

Romero's circumspection made him survive the war. There were plenty of instances when he would have probably been arrested by the Japanese. In fact, the Japanese were already suspicious of his loyalty, but he remained steadfast

and played the game through his tactical shrewdness. Other risky situations that could have led to his demise—had it not been for his political adroitness—were the creation the Reading Circle and the discovery of a printing press in the house of Romero's father in Tanjay.

As for the former, it was actually Romero's idea to form a Reading Circle. It was composed mostly of his friends in the local government, i.e., Mariano Perdices, Judge Patricio Ceniza, Engineer E.J. Blanco, and others that met once a week on Fridays. During the gatherings, the members would usually listen to a speaker talk about a certain topic of interest and there would also be some community singing. The gathering was held in the house of Romero at San Jose Street.²² It must be noted that the group was somehow an extension of the Rotary Club—as most of its members were also Rotarians. Nonetheless, to avoid Japanese suspicions, Romero also invited friends of the Japanese to the group, even the Japanese garrison commander.²³ In reality, however, the group had hidden intentions. It was during the gathering of these prominent members of society that they would surreptitiously exchange updated information on the war from the American side. Eventually, the group stopped meeting when the Japanese started to become suspicious of them.

Romero also had another close call with the Japanese upon the discovery of his printing press in his father's house in Tanjay. It must be pointed out that Romero used to manage and own a provincial newspaper before the war, so he had several printing presses available. One of those printing presses was hidden in the aforementioned house.

The guerrillas took interest in this certain printing press and planned—in coordination with Romero’s younger brother—to bring it to the hinterlands to be used for counter-propaganda against the Japanese. However, albeit quite fortuitous for Romero, they were not able to get the whole printing press—only some types. Romero was placed under investigation for possession of such printing press. Romero justified to the Japanese that he owned a newspaper company before the war and also informed them about the whereabouts of his remaining printing presses.²⁴ If the guerrillas were able to get the printing press in Tanjay, the Japanese would have found out about it and would immediately brand him as a member of the underground movement. This was indeed another narrow escape but it goes to show how sagacious Romero was in reasoning out with the Japanese.

Subsequently, during the latter years of the war, Romero was appointed as “representative of the central government” in Negros Oriental by Paulino Gullas (who was Laurel’s personal representative in the Visayas). He reluctantly accepted this position but opted not to exercise any form of power or influence. In his own words, he said: “I probably could have exercised some authority had I wanted to, but I refrained from exercising any whatsoever.”²⁵

Moreover, in another instance, when he was recommended by the Japanese to serve in the KALIBAPI Assembly—another avenue to exercise power—he declined and passed it to his friend Rep. Julian Teves.²⁶ Lastly, Laurel appointed Romero as Presiding Justice of the Court

of Appeals for the Visayas and Mindanao during the penultimate year of the war.²⁷

In this case, Romero had no choice but to accept it given that it was an order from Laurel himself. Nevertheless, he tried his best to delay his trip to Cebu. He would tell the Japanese commander in Dumaguete that it would take some time for him to travel to Cebu considering that he had to bring his family and belongings with him since it was a permanent position. The Japanese grew weary of his excuses and were starting to become suspicious of his intent. Eventually, Romero decided to travel to Cebu via Larena, Siquijor. He only reached as far as Larena because American warplanes wreaked havoc on the Japanese forces in Siquijor. Romero and other passengers were stranded in Larena for around 10 days, after which they returned to Dumaguete and learned that the Americans were already making their way into the city and liberating the different provinces.

These reservations to serve actively under the Japanese military administration, if not Laurel's Second Republic, showed Romero's real motivation for collaborating. He did not collaborate not because he believed in the ideals of the Japanese but simply because he needed to protect himself, the lives of his family, and of course, his constituents in Negros Oriental. His collaboration was to some extent similar to that of wartime Dumaguete Mayor Mariano Perdices. Subsequently, days before the Americans arrived in Dumaguete, Romero was appointed as acting governor of the province by the *Kempeitai* Commander.²⁸ But as acting Governor, he had no power or hold over the

people of Negros Oriental as most of them—just like at the outset of the war—started leaving the occupied areas toward the hinterlands as they tried to avoid being caught in the crossfires between the Americans/guerrillas and the Japanese. Romero, however, remained in Dumaguete with his family. He, along with Mayor Perdices and Mr. Serafin Teves, was at the Park Theater when the guerrillas first arrived in Dumaguete. They were looking from the balcony when they saw Major Galicano Sibala and Dodong Ridad (both guerrilla leaders) pass by. Then they greeted them and told them where the Japanese were heading.²⁹ Upon the arrival of the Americans, Romero was interrogated by a member of the Counter-Intelligence Corps (CIC)³⁰ who later on concluded that Romero was not an active collaborator after hearing Romero's experience during the war. Romero basically told him everything that had transpired, emphasizing that he had previously declined to "serve in the Council of State, the KALIBAPI, and in the position of Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeals for the Visayas and Mindanao."³¹ As a result, Romero was allowed to stay in his house after the war—a privilege that most of the other collaborators were not given, not even Mayor Perdices who actively worked with the underground movement.³²

ROMERO: THE PASSIVE COLLABORATOR

Jose Romero's collaboration was by all means a passive one. He was a reluctant collaborator who did not want any important position or role in the Japanese puppet government. The Japanese doubted his intentions as a collaborator, but because of his political adroitness, he was

able to convince them that he was not whom they thought he was. In fact, Romero recalled that the Japanese garrison commander of Dumaguete told him: “Romero-san like a banca; sometimes leaning toward Laurel government and Japanese, and other times leaning toward the Americans; *but he very clever, I cannot catch. But I clever also, and someday I catch.*”³³ The Japanese commander of Dumaguete was not so clever after all, since he was not able to prove that Romero was indeed loyal to the Americans. Even the Japanese commander of the entire Negros Island who, from Bacolod, visited Dumaguete believed that both Romero and Perdices were pro-American. He subsequently threatened them by saying: “We know that you are pro-American in your heart—but we will get you!”³⁴ Likewise, the Japanese commander of Negros Island did not get them. Romero outsmarted them all and played the game right.

His collaboration was not only passive but it was also a tactical one as he was able to outbluff the Japanese. It was, to use Peter Davies’ description of tactical collaboration, “one of the many ‘grey’ zones between the ‘black’ and ‘white’ of collaboration and resistance.”³⁵ Romero—like Perdices—played the double game to protect his wife and children and also his constituents. He could not just choose one side because it would be detrimental for him and his family. He chose both sides—communicating clandestinely with the guerrillas and collaborating, if reluctantly with the Japanese without holding any important position in the wartime government. In his own words, Romero succinctly described his passive, yet tactical, collaboration with the Japanese as follows:

In my situation it was like walking on [*sic*] a tightrope, I wanted to help guerrillas who were occasionally captured, but if I did invariably get them out of trouble and never said anything against any guerrilla, I would become a suspect as being in league with them: And one thing I had decided—I *would never give adverse information against any guerrilla... any time the Japanese asked me to vouch for a captured guerrilla, I never refused to do so and in this way I helped quite a few.*³⁶

Undoubtedly, Romero did not adhere to Japan's ideals. He was through and through loyal to the cause of the Americans. The guerrillas were cognizant about this, but the Japanese were not. From the very beginning of their occupation of the Philippines, the Japanese (especially the *Kempeitai*) already were suspicious of Romero's intent, but they never got any conclusive evidence to consider him as pro-American. Romero was also lucky to have many friends (e.g., Jorge Vargas, Benigno Aquino Sr., Guillermo Villanueva, and even the President himself, Jose P. Laurel) who collaborated with the Japanese and who vouched for him. From his experiences, it can be gleamed that he had no intent of actively collaborating with the Japanese. After the war, R.B. Silliman commended Romero for his pragmatism stating that his "wise and courageous behavior in the occupied territory was an inspiration for them in the mountains."³⁷ Indeed, there is nothing more courageous than playing a double game with your enemies, especially living together with them in the midst of war.

NOTES

- 1 For works on collaborationism at the national level, see Augusto de Viana, *Kulaboretor! The Issue of Political Collaboration during World War II* (Manila: University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, 2016) and David J. Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1967).
- 2 Satoshi Ara, "Collaboration and Resistance: Catalino Hermosilla and the Japanese Occupation of Ormoc, Leyte (1942-1945)," *Philippine Studies*, 60 (2012): 46-47.
- 3 George Ferguson Mitchell Nellist, ed., *Men of the Philippines: A Biographical Record of Men of Substantial Achievement in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: The Sugar News Co., 1931), 265-266.
- 4 According to Napoleon Rama: "Under the unicameral legislative then, the floor leadership was a much more prestigious and powerful position." Napoleon Rama, "New Boss... Old Crisis," *Philippines Free Press*, June 27, 1959, 36.
- 5 Jose E. Romero, *Not So Long Ago: A Chronicle of My Life, Times, and Contemporaries* (Manila: Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House, Inc., 1979), 143-144.
- 6 Hermenegildo "Bindoy" Villanueva was the brother of Governor Guillermo Villanueva. He was the Governor of Negros Oriental from 1931 to 1937. His son, Jesus Pablo Villanueva, also died in the aforesaid tragedy.
- 7 A.V.H. Hartendorp, *The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines*, Vol. 1 (Manila: The William J. Shaw Foundation, 1967), 69.
- 8 Romero did not burn all the printed copies of his speeches as it would probably catch the attention of the Japanese forces. So he merely hid all the copies in his house, hoping that the Japanese would not visit him there. By chance, as he wrote in his autobiography, the Japanese officer who occupied his office in the National Assembly was the same officer who executed Jose Abad

Santos. Eventually, he was told that the Kempeitai, in fact, had copies of his speeches, but they did not do anything to him thanks to his friends in Congress—the collaborators at the national level, like Benigno Aquino Sr., who vouched for Romero when he was asked by the Kempeitai. See Romero, *Not So Long Ago*, 151-153.

9 Ibid., 155.

10 Ibid., 158.

11 Romero spoke highly of Martinez, stating that he was “known for his great courage.” Ibid., 162.

12 Ibid., 163.

13 Alice Franklin Bryant, *The Sun was Darkened* (Boston: Chapman & Grimes, Inc., 1947), 90.

14 Ibid., 91.

15 Rodriguez, *War Years*, 42; Syjuco-Tan, *Philippine History*, 53-54.

16 Romero, *Not So Long Ago*, 164.

17 Ibid., 164.

18 G.Z. Villanueva, “To All Usaffe Remnants,” 17 January 1944. Found in R.B. Silliman World War II Papers, FN 86.

19 Ibid., 164-165.

20 Ibid., 165.

21 Ibid., 166.

22 The house of Romero was demolished (it used to be the old water district office before), and is now a local restaurant named AA Barbeque.

23 Antonino Calumpang, “From Tanjay to the Continent: Jose E. Romero,” in *Kabilin: Legacies of a Hundred Years of Negros Oriental*, edited by Merlie M. Alunan and Bobby Flores Villasis

(Negros Oriental: Negros Oriental Centennial Foundation, Inc., 1993), 191.

24 Romero, *Not So Long Ago*, 168.

25 *Ibid.*, 170.

26 There were only two members of the KALIBAPI Congress in Negros Oriental—the governor, Guillermo Villanueva, and Julian Teves. Romero explained to the Japanese that he did not have enough money to sustain himself in Manila and that his friend and colleague, Julian Teves, had no problems financially and could easily afford living in Manila. *Ibid.*, 171.

27 Later on, Romero asked Laurel why the latter appointed him as Justice of the Court of Appeals. To this query, Laurel simply told Romero that it was a way to save him (Romero) from the Japanese as their suspicion towards Romero had grown. *Ibid.*, 172.

28 *Ibid.*, 176.

29 Galicano Sibala, “My World War II Story.” Found in R.B. Silliman World War II Papers, FN 77.

30 The CIC cleared Romero’s name as they found out that he worked as a “sub-agent of the Allied Intelligence Bureau that was established in Negros.” Veronico Somera, *Brown American: Philippine Life, World War II and Survival in a White Man’s World* (United States of America: CreateSpace, 2014), 47; Romero’s involvement with the guerrillas was also corroborated by Major Benjamin Viloría, one of the guerrilla officers in Negros Oriental. Viloría stated that Romero—as a sub-agent of the AIB—served under Major Jesus Villamor and was in close contact with Deputy Governor Robert B. Silliman. See Benjamin Nisce Viloría, *They Carried On! Silliman University Men and Women in the Negros Resistance Movement, 1941-1945* (Manila: Veterans Federation of the Philippines, 1998), 105.

- ³¹ The CIC Officer then told the guerrilla officer who accompanied him to Romero: “Why are we investigating men like this?” Romero, *Not So Long Ago*, 178.
- ³² Romero cited that Perdices and other purported collaborators were detained in a concentration camp in Dumaguete. Ibid., 178.
- ³³ Ibid., 169.
- ³⁴ Robert B. Silliman, *Pocket of Resistance: Guerrilla Warfare in Negros Island, the Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Editions, 1980), 63.
- ³⁵ Peter Davies defined this term in his study of collaboration in Europe as the type of collaboration, which was “about out-bluffing the Germans.” Peter Davies, *Dangerous Liaisons: Collaboration and World War II* (London: Routledge, 2004), 23.
- ³⁶ Romero, *Not So Long Ago*, 165.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 165-166.

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