

## *A Japanese Soldier's Tale*

Here is a snippet from the Japanese side of the 1942 landings on Corregidor. Both the 1942 and 1945 scenarios can be very bloody for the Japanese:

When the Chief arrived there was a great deal of commotion. Following a hurried salutation by all the correspondents, he was bombarded with a barrage of questions which ended with: "When do we go to Corregidor?"

During the ensuing conversation, I discovered that the first group of soldiers had left Lamao at 11.00 p.m., while the second batch had followed at 4.00 a.m. In neither instance had any newspapermen been allowed to go with them. One of the officers, however, a certain Lieut. Mochizuki, had accompanied the second group and had returned with a report of the progress made by the first batch.

He told of how several special landing boats filled with men had crept towards Corregidor while Japanese artillery in Bataan opened up with a heavy barrage. At any rate, the enemy, probably suspecting an attempt at landing, suddenly brought their powerful searchlights into play and the invading party was discovered.

The landing was ordered between Infantry and Cavalry Points; in a miniature gulf. The squadron had just entered the inlet when the heavy guns began a concentrated fire on them from both sides. After that it was sheer massacre. Less than 30 per cent of the men reached the shore, and among these only a few were able to fight. (According to later confirmation, the lifeless bodies of Japanese soldiers were found floating around for nearly two days.)

Those who effected the landing and were still able to fight had scattered and taken their stand in the darkness. Many of them laid on their bellies and played dead until the enemy ceased firing. In the meantime, the Japanese shore batteries back in Bataan continued their relentless pounding of Corregidor, while daring night fliers rained hell on the resisting defenders. That initial assault lasted from 11.00 p.m. all through the night. At 4.00 a.m. the second landing was effected with greater success, although casualties were still by no means small. By that time the resistance of the American defenders on Corregidor had been so demoralized by the Intense bombardment of the heavy batteries on Bataan that the

Japanese forces swept up the slopes and captured Malinta Hill, highest point on the island fortress, at dawn.



As we sat listening to Lieut. Mochizuki, reports arrived that the third reinforcement was about to leave at 11,00 a.m., it was now just 10.40 a.m. Newsmen were on the alert, eagerly awaiting their chance, but so far no consent was forthcoming. The Japanese Command obviously felt that the sacrifice of troops was too great in itself, without the additional responsibility of sending defenseless writers to certain death.

At last, however, Col. Katsuya managed to obtain the permit. The newsmen were exuberantly happy at this piece of luck and were preparing to leave for the piers when the disheartening news arrived that the third contingent had already left. It was a bitter disappointment for the correspondents, who felt that they had been robbed of their rightful reward when the goal was already in sight. The roar of heavy guns, located just over the hill from the little camp, seemed to be a mockery as they thundered out their deafening salvos of destruction, shattering the silence of the forest glades and sending echoes reverberating through the jungle.

Col. Katsuya told the newsmen that reinforcements would be leaving hourly now. "Don't worry," he comforted, but the war correspondents strayed despondently back to their respective tents. A few lingered behind and these gave their own eye-witness accounts of that first landing as witnessed from Cabcallo.

It was a vivid, gripping drama that they described. "The gun behind us," said one Domei correspondent, "set up a thunderous roar, sending a ceaseless stream of projectiles on to Corregidor. In the distance, across the Bay, a small group of boats rounded a cape and drifted slowly toward their destination. The sputter of the motors seemed to be saying goodbye and we felt ashamed that we ourselves could not have gone with this first contingent of 'human bullets'.

"By now the Corregidor batteries had gone into action—but insignificantly. The sound of the motors was drowned in the inferno. Above, the stars still twinkled, but the moon hid herself from the god-awful scene that was to be enacted a few minutes later below.

"Suddenly the searchlights on Corregidor at both Infantry and Cavalry Points were switched on in a concentrated blaze of light. Even from this distance the landing boats were visible. The shore defenses on Corregidor blazed into action. It was a dreadful massacre. A hundred guns rained red-hot steel on to the suicide boats.

"Judging from the continuation of the firing, we imagined that the squadron was still pushing shoreward in the face of this curtain of molten death. We watched intently. The fire of steel slowly concentrated into a closed area and then we knew that the squadrons had reached the shore. It was a spectacle that confounded the imagination, surpassing in grim horror anything we had ever seen before. An area of not less than a mile square was a solid mass of red-hot, flying steel. And somewhere inside that ring of death was a tiny remnant of those 'human bullets' who had so shortly before left this shore. We wondered in our hearts how many still survived. How could any human beings survive in that terrible inferno?

"In the meantime, our heavy guns, securely hidden in the forests of Bataan, kept on pounding out their incessant message of death and destruction. From above, the Japanese aviators, who held complete domination in the air, showered their bombs on the Corregidor defenses. From every aspect it was a tremendous battle," Mr. Higuchi of Domei concluded.

From:

Corregidor: Isle of Delusion

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