

The Palaris uprising

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The insurrection in Pangasinan Province started in the town of San Carlos. Residents defied the tribute collector on the ground that, with the British occupation of the capital, the colonial government no longer existed. They demanded that partial payments made earlier in the year be returned. The rebels also asked that certain Spanish officials be deposed and native-born persons be allowed to hold office. They resented being forced to work without pay as laborers in the repair of roads and the construction of ships and buildings.

Letters had been dispatched by the rebels to adjoining towns, which, having suffered from Spanish abuses joined the movement. Juan dela Cruz Palaris, a member of the principalia class in San Carlos, emerged as the leader of the uprising. The rebels took control of the province except of the towns of Asingan, in the east, and Binmaley, on Lingayen Gulf.

Acting Governor Simon de Anda y Salazar, from his headquarters in Bacolor, Pampanga, tried to effect a truce. Friar Melendez invited Palaris to Lingayen and when the latter insisted that the alcalde mayor, Joaquin de Gamboa, be replaced and that all Spaniards leave the province the conference broke up without reaching anything definite.

The Dominican provincial then journeyed from Manila to Pangasinan as a special envoy of the Anda government, offering amnesty under certain conditions, including the return of the rebels to Spanish rule. All the towns except San Carlos agreed to Anda's terms.

The rebels ambushed an ammunition cart between Dagupan and San Carlos. Simultaneously they attacked the largest town of the province at that time-Lingayen-and captured the arms stored there. The rebels, hitherto armed only with bamboo lances, bows and arrows, and bolos, became better prepared to meet the troops that Anda had sent from Pampanga, Bataan and Zambales.

The adversaries met near Bayambang in March of 1763. Spanish artillery carried the day and the rebels fled in disunity. Meanwhile the Dominicans were busy exhorting their flock to remain submissive to the Spanish rule, promising improvements in the administration of the province. The new alcalde mayor asked Palaris and his followers to surrender, but Palaris had learned that the Spanish troops who had just defeated Diego and Gabriela Silang had arrived from the north, and proudly refused.

"We had just learned that the Lord Governor Anda, the religious and the cabos who do not belong to our party are united in one objective-to kill us," wrote Palaris on Christmas Eve in 1763. "But we will not die alone."

On the following day government troops crossed the Agno River and razed the town of Bayambang. The insurgents in nearby areas could not stop them. Rebellious either surrendered or were set on fire.

By January 1765 the end came. Abandoned by his followers, Palaris led a hunted life in the forested areas of the provinces. His own sister betrayed him to the authorities. Thus ended the second revolt in the north, early in the 18th century.

The casualties of fighting, hunger and disease included 70 Spaniards, 230 native auxiliaries and over 10,000 rebels. The population of Pangasinan declined from 70,363 in 1762 to 33,456 in 1765, due mainly to the flight of frightened residents to nearby peaceful provinces.

--CARLOS QUIRINO

