

AGUINALDO AND THE DEATH OF BONIFACIO AND LUNA*

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I.

WHEN General Emilio Aguinaldo died on February 6, there followed some loose talks about so-called revelations on the mysterious death of Andres Bonifacio, Father of the Katipunan, and General Antonio Luna, the most brilliant Filipino officer during the Filipino- American war. I have been asked by friends to say something about those tragic events, and even newspaper columnists — among them my friend and *comprovinciano*, Jose L. Guevara of the *Manila Times* — hinted to me and to Carlos Quirino to write the "now-it-can-be-told" stories. This fact is rather distressing, at least to me, for the so-called mystery of the death of the two Filipino heroes has already been cleared in two of my books: the death of Bonifacio in *The Revolt of the Masses* and that of Luna in *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*. That there should be an ardent wish even at this late date to know the whys and wherefores of those two similar events is a measure not of our people's sense of history, but of their peripheral interest in historical writings.

At any rate, I am here to recapitulate the facts and interpretations of the two events and to add a few belated thoughts on the subject.

Up to the outbreak of the Revolution in 1896, Andres Bonifacio had been the dominant figure of the revolutionary *Katipunan* which gave force and direction to the Filipino mass movement. He was a great organizer who, stepping beyond the limitations of his scholastic status, gathered together the loose strands of the people's faith and wove them into a rope of unity that bound them to the ideals of an emerging nation. His usefulness and significance ended here, for he showed little aptitude in the clash of arms and the din of battles — an almost fatal deficiency. He nearly lost his life and, in perspective, gradually lost his prestige as leader of the people in wrathful agony.

As if Death had marked him for poetic tragedy, he crossed the rough terrain of Rizal to Cavite upon the invitation of the rival revolutionary factions in this province not to harness and direct the revolutionary potential, but to mediate between the warring leaders and their followers. The spirited welcome he received from the Caviteños enthused Bonifacio, for on this soil tainted with the deep red blood of the recently fallen comrades-in-arms he found exhilaration in the acclamation of his countrymen. But this enthusiasm, however was fatal. In the eyes of the proud Caviteños, he acted imprudently, like a king, they said, and so they looked upon him more as an intruder than as a peacemaker. The seed of envy and discontent was thus sown which subsequently occasioned the birth of tragedy in Tejeros.

Bonifacio was uncompromising in his revolutionary posture, while the rising Emilio Aguinaldo was elastic in his. The two temperaments clashed when Aguinaldo, moved by a sense of

* Obtained and transcribed from a set of digital photographs uploaded to facebook.com by Elizabeth Angsioco (URL: <https://www.facebook.com/beth.angsioco/posts/10153594289527512>).

humanity, ordered the release of the Spanish prisoners of war. Bonifacio looked upon this act with a hostility that compelled him to order the arrest of the prisoners and their Filipino escorts. Viewed from this distance, his act in countermanding Aguinaldo's order was justified, for it was a season of death, a period of seasoned fear and danger and war. The armed disturbances had made the enemy more unjust and more brutal and, therefore, not disposed to forgive and forget. Must the Filipino rebels meet this attitude with softness? The paramount question, insofar as Bonifacio was concerned, was "we or they." It could not have been otherwise, for all was fair in war.

There is no evidence to show that Aguinaldo took any drastic step to win back what he had lost in face. With an inscrutable poise, he continued leading his men to battle after battle, allowing Bonifacio to enjoy the uncertain security of the soil that had been drenched with the blood of Caviteños. He did not force the issue against Bonifacio, for he knew that many of his *comprovincianos* were already seething with anger that would be released in time to engulf the Supremo. The Caviteños behaved accordingly, and soon, rumors, all unfounded and unverified, circulated that Bonifacio had been keeping the people's contributions for himself and that he was a Mason, an unbeliever. The rumors wore fantastic but they nevertheless served to project a distorted image of their Supremo. Rumors have their potent uses during a period of disturbance when the minds of men are easily unhinged by fear. And so, the Caviteños instinctively resorted to rumors to cut down Bonifacio to size. His being a Mason was magnified, distorted. The propagandists of this campaign of hate did not realize or refused to see that their own *Heneral* Miong was a Mason. Yet, in the contest of the period and in the physical backdrop that lent respectability to rumors, Bonifacio's Masonry was considered devilish, while that of Aguinaldo was angelic.

The silent conflict between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo burst into the open during the tumultuous Tejeros convention of March 22, 1897. It was Aguinaldo's birthday, and he was spending it quietly waiting for the enemy attack against the barrio of Salitran, Dasmariñas. He was not aware that an election was being held that afternoon, for nobody notified him of the event. Yet, in his absence, the convention assembled catapulted him to the highest position — that of President of the Revolutionary Government. The election would have gone on peacefully had it not been for the imprudence of Daniel Tirona who, ignoring the gentlemen's agreement concluded previously to respect whoever was to be elected to any position, questioned Bonifacio's fitness to occupy the position of Secretary of the Interior. The Supremo's nerves had already been frayed by the rumors accumulating and circulating about him and by his failure to persuade the convention not to supersede the *Katipunan* with a new government. Tirona's imprudence snapped Bonifacio's nerves, and the latter forthwith denounced the proceedings and nullified the results of the election in his capacity as Supremo. Bristling with anger, he left the session hall with his followers.

The following day, March 23, Bonifacio and his leading men, including General Artemio Ricarte — who was elected captain-general the previous day — met at the same estate-house in Tejeros and drew up a document, known as the *Acta de Tejeros*, wherein they denounced the election as rigged and, therefore, null and void. Subsequently, Bonifacio and his men, including Generals Pio del Pilar and Mariano Noriel, met at the estate-house of Naik and drew up a

document setting forth their intention to establish a new government and an army independent of that of Aguinaldo. These two documents clearly and unequivocally announced the decision of the signers not to recognize (*sic*) Aguinaldo's government and, on the other hand, to establish another government with a separate military arm. Legally, Bonifacio's position was weak, but legal niceties are not taken seriously in turbulent times.

Aguinaldo was informed of Bonifacio's meeting with his men at the estate-house. Although on the rack, Aguinaldo hurried to the estate-house to confront the Supremo. A man of steel nerves, Aguinaldo quietly rebuked Bonifacio, in very polite language, for keeping him out of the meeting. Aguinaldo had hardly left the estate-house when Bonifacio and his men sought refuge in Limbon, Indang.

Aguinaldo's surprise at Bonifacio's splinter movement was, I believe, a mock one. He probably expected it. His surprise was feigned for effect, that is to say, he wanted Bonifacio to believe that he, Aguinaldo, wanted a reconciliation with the former — a reconciliation which would strengthen, not lessen, his presidential position. Aguinaldo may have been tainted with naïveté, but he was shrewd and cunning. He had not, so far, moved against Bonifacio, for he probably knew that Bonifacio would, sooner or later, fall to the ground like a ripe fruit. He had no intention of pursuing the Supremo, for he knew that he was lord and master on Cavite soil. But his men exerted pressure on him to arrest Bonifacio and his brothers, for they posed a danger to the rebel cause. To allow Bonifacio to leave Cavite was tantamount to giving him the opportunity to divide the rebels into two rival camps — a situation that would be tragic in view of the spirited offensives the enemy had been conducting against them. Under this pressure, Aguinaldo commissioned Colonel Agapito Bonzon, Jose Ignacio Pawa, and Felipe Topacio to arrest Bonifacio.

The arresting officers and their men succeeded in capturing Bonifacio and his men after a skirmish. Bonifacio was wounded in the throat and left arm. His younger brother, Ciriaco, was shot down, and his other brother, Procopio, was arrested. The Supremo was borne in a hammock to the municipal building of Indang. On April 29, the wounded Supremo was transferred to Naik, where the trial began on the same day. I shall not go into the details of the trial: I have translated the proceedings of this trial in my *The Writings and Trial of Andres Bonifacio*. It is sufficient for the present purpose to say that only the testimony - and a perverted one - of Bonifacio's own man, Pedro Giron, was believed in by the men who investigated Bonifacio. There is nothing in the testimonies of the other witnesses that could condemn Bonifacio and his brother Procopio to death. Bonifacio was not even allowed to confront the hostile witness on the ground that he was killed in battle. The truth, however, is that Giron outlived Bonifacio by many years. Above all, Bonifacio's defense counsel, Plácido Martinez, wrapped up his client in a plethora of denunciations (*sic*), pleaded only for pardon for the man who had "done the evil deeds." In the history of jurisprudence, civil or military, Martinez's actuation was unprecedented and uncalled for. Under such circumstances -- trial in a hostile territory by persons who acted as accusers and judges at the same time — Bonifacio's fate had been sealed from the beginning. Even his brother Procopio who, by all testimonies, including that of Pedro Giron, had nothing to do with the counter-revolutionary movement and with the alleged attempt to usurp the powers of the established government, was condemned to death.

On May 8, upon the receipt of the death sentence, General Aguinaldo commuted the death penalty to banishment. Thus the commutation:

I deem it proper to pardon Mr. Andres Bonifacio and Procopio Bonifacio from the penalty of death and to change this to an indefinite exile, a punishment which will be served in an isolated place and they will be guarded by prison officials and not allowed to talk to each other and likewise to other persons. . . .

On the same day, the commutation order was presented to the defense counsels — Placido Martinez in representation of Andres Bonifacio, and Teodoro Gonzalez, in representation of Procopio. Yet the document stating that the death penalty was shown to Andres and Procopio shows only two signatures: those of Lazaro Makapagal, the Secretary of the Council of War which tried the Bonifacio brothers, and Procopio. There is no signature of Andres. Which means that he was not notified of the commutation. In a separate document, it was made to appear that the commutation order was shown to Andres, but the document has neither the signature of Andres nor of Makapagal who, in all documents of the trial, attested to the veracity of the proceedings.

The documents, therefore, are clear: Bonifacio and his brother were not to be shot but to be banished to some designated place. But on May 10, General Mariano Noriel handed Major Lazaro Makapagal a sealed envelop whose contents spelled the death of the brothers.

I quote this document in full:

Major Makapagal:

In accordance with the order of the Council of War held at Maragondong on May 8, against the brothers Andres and Procopio Bonifacio, who have been sentenced to be shot to death, you and your soldiers under you are ordered to carry out the judgment.

You are hereby warned that for any negligence or carelessness that you commit in carrying out this order, you will be held responsible and subjected to the rigor of the laws in the code of Spanish Military Court.

May God guard you for many years.

(Sgd.) M. NORIEL

Maragondong, May 10, 1897.

In accordance with this order, Major Makapagal had the Bonifacio brothers shot at the foot of Mt. Buntis, recently identified as Mt. Nagpatong.

For many years, the question that disturbed the scholars of Philippine history was: If there was a commutation order, as indeed there was, why were the Bonifacio brothers executed? Teodoro M. Kalaw, in ruminating upon this mystery, pointedly asked: "In brief, if the accused had to die, why were they pardoned? And if they were pardoned, why were they executed?"

During my college days, I applied myself to the task of solving the so-called mystery, and in an article, "The Tragedy of Tejeros and Its Aftermath," published in 1934, I pointed out that there was a discrepancy between the testimony of General Pio del Pilar, who maintained that the commutation order was not received at General Noriel's headquarters in time to stay the execution of Bonifacio, and the facts of the case. I advanced the theory that since Noriel's headquarters and those of Aguinaldo were in the same town, it was impossible for Noriel not to have received the latter's commutation order on the same day.

Since there was a lapse of two days between the issuance of the commutation order and the execution, it would seem, I added, that General Pio del Pilar's excuse was lame.

I pursued this line of thinking when I was preparing my book *The Revolt of the Masses* in 1947-48 and, to clear all doubts, I interviewed General Aguinaldo at his San Nicolas St. headquarters several times. I coaxed him into making a clean breast of it all in order to clarify matters before he passed to eternity. Obviously, the General was impressed with my passionate appeal, for in a few minutes he was telling me what appeared to be the whole story. It was the first time that he opened up on a subject which he considered "delicate". Here is his explanation for the so-called mystery.

The very day that he sent his commutation order to General Noriel, the latter and General Pio del Pilar — both of whom, it must be remembered, were with Bonifacio concocting the Naik Military Agreement which laid the plans for the establishment of an army independent of that of Aguinaldo's Revolutionary Government -- rushed to his headquarters and pleaded with him to withdraw his commutation order. He was made to understand that his order would place the revolutionary forces in an untenable position, for there would be a bifurcation in their ranks — a dangerous situation in view of the impending Spanish offensive against Maragondon. The poet and historian, Clemente Jose Zulueta, and General Mamerto Natividad -- both of whom Bonifacio had accused of being stooges of the friars — threw the weight of their reputation by seconding Noriel and del Pilar's importunity. Aguinaldo was young and not outstanding in intellectual matters, and faced with a potential danger within and an actual danger without, he acceded to his subordinate officers' request. He withdrew the commutation order — verbally -- and allowed the original decision to be carried out. Hence the execution of May 10.

The mystery, therefore, of the execution of the Bonifacio brothers is no longer a mystery. But a problem has taken its place — one that can no longer be solved since the participants are all dead. Studying all the facts of the case, one may ask why General Noriel and General Pio del Pilar, during their lifetime, did not say that General Aguinaldo withdrew his commutation order upon their representations. There are two possibilities: first, they did not want to appear as villains at a time when Bonifacio was being revered as hero and patriot; or second, they did not really make any representations with General Aguinaldo to withdraw his commutation order. There is here an understandable lying either on the part of Noriel and del Pilar, or on the part of General Aguinaldo. On the former's request for Aguinaldo to withdraw his commutation order, we have only the self-serving testimony of Aguinaldo. Was he telling the truth? We have no way of knowing, for Noriel and del Pilar are all dead and can no longer answer Aguinaldo. This is one of the questions of Philippine historiography that cannot, for the moment, be resolved satisfactorily.

At least to my mind, one thing is certain: Bonifacio and his brother were not given a fair trial. It is quite clear to perceptive students of the Revolution that there was an intrigue against him and that there was an ill-concealed intention to liquidate him for personal reasons or for reasons of state, or for both. If the commutation order was really shown to Bonifacio, why does not his signature appear on the document? Makapagal explained this away by saying that the Supremo could not sign it "on account of the fact that his hand has some serious trouble," meaning, of course, that Bonifacio's hand had a wound, therefore, could not use it for the purpose of signing the document acknowledging that he had read it. This is an excuse that cannot be accepted, for the very documents themselves relate that Bonifacio was wounded in the left, not in the right hand. And he was a right-handed man, according to the testimonies not only of his wife, but also of his friend and former neighbor, the late Guillermo Masangkay. We can only deduce that the commutation order was never shown to Andres Bonifacio, Why? Here my answer is speculative, namely, to keep Bonifacio in ignorance of the document and, therefore, to keep him from protesting his execution.

II

SO much for the death of Bonifacio. We now come to the equally tragic death of General Antonio Luna. There has been whispered innuendoes that General Aguinaldo, not satisfied with the liquidation of Bonifacio, extended his bloody arm to General Luna who, it has been claimed, stood in the way of the President of the first Republic. The mystery in the case of Luna's death is more baffling than that of Bonifacio, which is now, I hope, accounted for and explained.

Antonio Luna, who belonged to the *ilustrado* class, was a man of explosive temper. In 1896 when the *Katipunan* was discovered and the Spanish response to it was swift and vigorous, he impressed the Spanish inquisitors with his strong denunciation of the society which he and a large segment of his class considered boorish. Exiled to Spain, he read military history and imbibed a martial spirit that imparted on him the air of a conqueror. He was in Hongkong when the Spanish-American war broke out. Like the perceptive members of the Hongkong Junta, Luna foresaw the coming of the Filipino-American conflict. He approached Felipe Agoncillo for a letter of recommendation to Aguinaldo, for he was then convinced that he was needed in the coming struggle with a new conqueror. In Manila, he presented his credentials to Aguinaldo who, needing men with a military background, appointed him Brigadier-General and Director of War in September, 1898 — over the sullen objections of Aguinaldo's veteran comrades-in-arms. In less than two months, Luna rose to Division General and, at the opening of the Filipino-American hostilities on February 4, 1899, to Chief of Operations and Commander-in-Chief of Central Luzon.

Luna tried to improve not only the discipline but also the organization of Aguinaldo's army. It was a tremendous task, for the Filipino troops had nothing but raw courage and fierce love of country to speak of. He was still trying to solve these military problems when the incident at Balsahan Bridge, San Juan, exploded to terminate the shaky Filipino-American cooperation and friendship.

Luna's tempestuous temper first flared up during the operations aimed at re-taking Manila from the Americans. On February 24, Luna, upon returning from San Fernando, Pampanga, where

he visited his sick sister, saw his lines breaking down and immediately ordered Captain Pedro Janolino, commander of the Kawit Company, to join the fray. Janolino refused, saying that he had been instructed to obey nobody but Aguinaldo. Luna's first impulse was to shoot down Janolino for insubordination, but the proverbial cooler heads intervened. Instead, Luna disarmed the Kawit Company and sent them to Malolos, expecting Aguinaldo to punish the erring officer. To Luna's surprise and chagrin, Aguinaldo reinstated the Kawit men. Luna was furious and looked upon Aguinaldo's actuation as an insult to his honor and dignity. He tendered his resignation as Chief of Operations, but Aguinaldo did not accept it.

Meanwhile, President McKinley sent the Schurman Commission to the Philippines to lay down the bases of Filipino-American relations. One of the bases was the enforcement of the "authority of the United States throughout the Philippines"—which was promptly rejected by the party of irreconcilables headed by Mabini and Luna. When Aguinaldo expressed his desire for a cessation of hostilities in order to give the people and his colleagues the opportunity to decide on the matter and, consequently sent a commission, headed by Manuel Arguelles, to Manila to talk things over with the American authorities, Luna promptly ordered the arrest of Arguelles and clamped him in jail. When the Mabini Cabinet fell in May, Paterno took over the premiership. Buencamino became the Foreign Secretary. The political orientation of the Republic, then, passed from one of Independence to one of appeasement. Luna, who shared Mabini's political ideology, was furious and had the members of the Cabinet arrested. Aguinaldo released them later.

Luna's anger increased when he met Buencamino who was then with Aguinaldo and other high officials of the government. Luna accused Buencamino of being a traitor and an autonomist. The latter, stung by the pointed accusation, reminded Luna of his desertion of Kalumpit when the enemy was about to launch an attack against this town. Buencamino was referring to the defeat of the Filipinos in the battle of Bagbag in April when Luna withdrew his artillery and cavalry from Kalumpit and went to Guagua in order to subjugate General Tomas Mascardo who refused to heed his orders. Luna's withdrawal was not sanctioned by General Aguinaldo and was, in military law, desertion punishable with death. Luna's temper got the better of him, particularly because the defeat at Bagbag was caused by his unauthorized withdrawal of almost half of the Filipino troops from the sector that was exposed to the American artillery and infantry. He lunged at Buencamino and slapped him across the face.

Luna, then, was making enemies right and left. Even Mabini, who sided with him when Aguinaldo reinstated the Kawit Company, commented in a letter to the latter that he, Luna, was "unfit to command an army...because he is a despot." In another letter to Aguinaldo, Mabini, scandalized at Luna's abuses, suggested that the fiery general be removed from office. It was during this time that rumors flew thick and fast that Luna was eyeing Aguinaldo's position. More, Luna was represented as having circulated the ugly rumor that Aguinaldo was incompetent. It is impossible to believe that Aguinaldo was unaware of these rumors, for he had loyal officers and men under Luna. In a letter to Aguinaldo, Jose Joven Alas, Baldomero Aguinaldo's aide-de-camp, pointed out that Luna was "forming a party whose purpose is to replace you as President." Mabini, on the other hand, received an anonymous letter warning him against Luna who, the letter writer said, was plotting a *coup d'etat*. "Remember," continued the letter, "that

Luna was an informer and owing to his denunciations Rizal, N. Adriano, Franco and others, were executed." This passage refers to Luna's testimony before the Spanish inquisitors after the outbreak of the Revolution in 1896 wherein he denounced the *Katipunán*.

The web of intrigues was thus woven around Luna who, it may be presumed, was not aware of it. That the rumors were idle and baseless is shown by the fact that Luna, before leaving Bayambang for Kabanatuan, dismissed as inconsequential an anonymous letter warning him of a plot against his life and that the plotters were the annexationists. Luna, in fact, left for Kabanatuan without any premonition of tragedy.

The mystery of Luna's death hinges on a telegram that he purportedly received from Kabanatuan. This telegram is missing.

The question arises: Why did Luna leave for Kabanatuan on June 5? The testimonies of those close to him said he received a telegram from Kabanatuan, presumably from Aguinaldo. Aguinaldo, in his *Second Look at America*, claimed that it was Luna who sent him a telegram saying that he wanted to confer with him. If this is so, where is this telegram? I failed to locate the alleged telegram here and in the United States.

At all events, Luna left Bayambang early in the morning of June 4 for Bautista, where he and his staff boarded a train for Victoria, Tarlak. From here, they proceeded to Licab, Nueva Ecija, where they took a light, breakfast. Their next stop was in Aliaga, where Luna left his cavalry escort. With Colonel Francisco Roman and Captain Eduardo Rusca, he boarded a *carromata* for Kabanatuan. They arrived in town between 1 and 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Luna alighted and proceeded to the convent, where Aguinaldo had established his headquarters. Upon entering the convent hall, his temper rose to a pitch when a sentinel, surprised at his presence, did not know what to do. Luna slapped the poor man and proceeded upstairs. Here he found Buencamino and his already frayed nerves snapped. Not finding Aguinaldo, he was alleged to have insulted the absent President and Buencamino. "Why call for me," he was reported by an eyewitness to have exclaimed, "when he could not keep his appointment!" He expressed exasperation: "My time has been wasted!"

Luna and Buencamino were exchanging heated words when a rifle shot broke the stillness of the warm summer day. Luna's fury was augmented by the rifle report, and he rushed downstairs to investigate. He found Captain Pedro Janolino, the man he disarmed in February for insubordination, at the foot of the stairs. Janolino, thinking Luna would harm him, unsheathed his bolo and hacked the general in the head. The other members of the Kawit Company followed suit, firing and striking at the wounded general with their daggers. Luna rushed out of the convent into the street and there fell, muttering: "Cow...ards! Assassins!" His aide-de-camp, Colonel Roman, rushed to his aid but was mowed down by the furious Kawit Company.

An eyewitness, Gregorio Fajardo, noted that Buencamino emerged from the convent and inquired whether any of the Presidential guards had been hurt. Then he allegedly added: "At last they are dead. Go see the body and get all the papers from his pockets, especially the telegram. Don't be afraid; we will take care of you."

One problem crops up in this connection. Director Carlos Quirino in his *The Aguinaldo Story* (*The Manila Times*, February 18, 1964), approvingly quotes Manuel L. Quezon as saying that on June 5 the Aguinaldo party, to which Quezon belonged, "proceeded in the direction of Bautista [sic] where we arrived at night." (Quezon said Bayambang, not Bautista). On the other hand, General Venancio Concepcion, in his unpublished diaries, *Apuntes y Diario de Operaciones*, said that at 2:30 in the afternoon of June 5, he received at his headquarters in Angeles, Pampanga, a telegram from Aguinaldo notifying him that he, Aguinaldo, had provisionally established his headquarters in Bamban, Tarlak, and that he was taking over the command of all military operations in Central Luzon. Concepcion further stated that Aguinaldo and his party arrived in Angeles at 7:00 in the evening of the same day. The conflict in those two testimonies lies in the fact that while Quezon maintained that the Aguinaldo party spent the night of June 5 in Bayambang, Pangasinan, General Concepcion recorded in his diaries that Aguinaldo's party arrived in Angeles at 7:00 in the evening of June 5.

I am inclined to believe the accuracy of General Concepcion. Quezon wrote his memoirs (*The Good Fight*, New York and London, D. Appleton-Century and Company, 1946) during the Second World War, while General Concepcion's account was a day-to-day report of his activities during the turbulent years of the Filipino-American war. With General Concepcion's account as basis, I deduce that General Aguinaldo never went as far as Bayambang, Pangasinan, but on the contrary left Kabanatuan for San Isidro and from here to Bamban, Tarlak, and, finally to Angeles, Pampanga. It was here, on June 6, that General Concepcion, having received a telegram from Paterno, who was then in Kabanatuan, learned of Luna's assassination. It was from him that General Aguinaldo learned of Luna's death.

We now come to the crucial question: Was Aguinaldo responsible for Luna's death? The pieces of evidence show he was not. In one of my sessions with General Aguinaldo, in 1943, I asked him point-blank if he had anything to do with Luna's assassination. The old general answered with another question: "If I wanted Luna murdered, do you think I would be foolish enough to have him liquidated right in my own headquarters and so draw the suspicion to me?" Then he added: "It was easy to have him killed by the simple expedient of ordering my loyal men to shoot him in the midst of battle and then blame the Americans for his death. No, I did not even know of his death until General Bina showed me Paterno's telegram announcing Luna's death.

"But," I said, "were you aware of Luna's machinations, if any?"

"Not that I know of," was his curt reply.

I did not believe him then. I still do not believe his statement. There is no doubt that he had been infected with the virus of anti-Luna rumors as evidenced by the following facts:

1. Aguinaldo circularized his officers telling them of an internal danger and asking them to remain loyal to him. General Francisco Makabulos of Tarlak was one of those who received a copy of the circular.

2. He placed under arrest General Concepcion and the latter's officers — Colonel Cavestany, Lieutenant-Colonels Quirong and Cajanding, and Majors Vister, Cruz, Estanislao, and Ochoa,

on the night of June 5, that is, before the receipt of the telegram announcing Luna's death. These officers were alleged to have been pro-Luna.

3. On June 6, after learning of Luna's death, Aguinaldo elevated his man, Colonel Luciano San Miguel, to the rank of brigadier-general and then unceremoniously replaced Concepcion with San Miguel. The two companies under Concepcion which he presented to Aguinaldo were disarmed and discharged on suspicion that they were pro-Luna. Concepcion was then detailed to the Office of the Captain-General (Aguinaldo), where he and Colonels Leyba and Hizon were known as "the punished ones".

4. On June 9, Aguinaldo issued a decree for the arrest of Luna's commissioners for alleged robbery.

5. The brothers Jose and Manuel Bernal, Luna's junior aides, were treated cavalierly after the death of their chief. Angel Bernal, youngest brother Luna's aides, was disarmed, slapped, and jailed in the convent of Dagupan on orders of General Gregorio del Pilar, Aguinaldo's trusted man. Manuel Bernal was stripped of his uniform and military insignias and bastinadoed. Later, Manuel was shot to death. Jose Bernal, on the other hand, was transferred to Angeles, Pampanga, where he was murdered by the soldiers of Colonel Servillano Aquino.

All these, however, do not point to Aguinaldo as the culprit. But they point to this: that despite Aguinaldo's disclaimer, he suspected Luna of having ambitions to replace him as President of the Republic. His suspicion had no basis in fact, for there is so far no evidence to show that Luna ever plotted a *coup d'etat*. If he had any plan to overthrow Aguinaldo, he would not have gone to Kabanatuan with only two men — Colonel Francisco Roman and Captain Eduardo Rusca — as aides. More, Luna left his nineteen-man escort in Aliaga, Nueva Ecija.

We return to the mystery of the telegram. Who sent the telegram: Luna or Aguinaldo? If Luna did, where is it? Why did not Aguinaldo keep it as he kept the other documents of the Revolutionary Period which were later captured by the Americans and turned over to the Philippine Government in 1958? If, on the other hand, Luna received the telegram asking him to see Aguinaldo in Kabanatuan, where is this telegram? If the eyewitness of the bloody event, Gregorio Fajardo, can be relied upon, it was Buencamino who ordered the soldiers to get all the papers from Luna's body. This explains the disappearance of the telegram to Luna. But who sent the telegram, assuming that Fajardo's testimony is reliable? Aguinaldo denied he ever sent a telegram to Luna. It is possible, then, that Buencamino sent the telegram to Luna in Aguinaldo's name, but without the latter's knowledge. In a letter dated November 9, 1928, Buencamino swore in the name of God and his parents that he "never had any hand, directly or indirectly, in the deplorable incident". He asked Aguinaldo, through Bishop Gregorio Aglipay, to issue a denial of his (Buencamino's) part in the assassination of Luna. Aguinaldo was reported to have promised to issue such a statement, but up to the time of his death on February 6, 1964, he never made any statement clearing Buencamino.

The following conclusions are, therefore, inescapable:

1. Aguinaldo had nothing to do with Luna's assassination; even so,

2. he knew that there was a plot to liquidate Luna but did not discourage the conspirators, who must have been close to him, from carrying out their bloody deed.

That Aguinaldo was not averse to Luna's liquidation is shown by the fact that he never punished the Kawit soldiers who simultaneously attacked Luna.

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