

How the Philippines Saved 1,200 Jews from the Nazi Crematories - MabuhayRadio

Written by Jose Sison Luzadas

Saturday, 31 May 2008 23:40 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 June 2008 00:23

The Earl Bales Park in Toronto, Canada, is located south of Finch Avenue along Bathurst Street. The park has only two bust monuments that were allowed by the city to be erected. There is much to learn about these two monuments and why they were erected for two men who are not even Canadians! The second bust is that of Jose P. Rizal, the foremost Filipino national hero.

Earl Bales Is More Than A Park

Instead of Heading to the Crematories, 1,200 Jews Arrived in Manila

Filipino Believe It Or Not!

By Jose Sison Luzadas

Delray Beach, Florida

If by chance you are in Toronto, Canada, please visit the EARL BALES Park, located south of Finch Avenue along Bathurst Street. While you are there, get close to two bust monuments so far allowed by the city to be erected. Ask yourself what is there to learn about these two monuments and why they were erected for two men who are NOT even Canadians!

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Earl Bales Park is not just a "Mecca" for people who picnic on Sundays or in the case of Filipino-Canadians, a gathering place to celebrate Philippine Independence Day. This prime real estate of several acres became "hallowed ground", a fitting tribute to a Swedish diplomat who risked his life from the Gestapo and SS men issuing visa and passport to German Jews destined to the crematories in Nazi-occupied countries.

The Rizal bust at Earl Bales reminds the Filipino community and lovers of freedom who admired Dr. Rizal's stand against Spanish brutalities, oppression and all forms of tyranny. The presence of these statues reflects Canada's international image of tolerance and hospitality that earned the respect and admiration from immigrants coming to make it their second home allowing them to erect statues as link to their home country and their historic past.

The installation of the Rizal bust was a project of the Order of the Knights of Rizal Canada Region as a gift on behalf of the Filipino community to the City of Toronto. The bust was given by the Foreign Affairs Department in Manila through the active intervention of Sir Francisco Santos, KCR, who was then Philippine Consul General in Toronto. Sir Ka Miling Siverio, KGCR, head of Canada Region mobilized ways and means to get the necessary funds for the stand, pedestal and landscaping upkeep. Sir Poy Cana, KGCR, another ranking member, together with chapter commanders worked out the finishing touches to complete the project in time for the 10th OKR International Assembly. Credit goes to businessman Sir Mann Nacario, KCR, who vigorously campaigned to have Earl Bales Park as the "place to be"! Sir Willie Cantos, KCR, and Sir Joe Luzadas, KGOR, were assigned to make contacts with the city government for its approval.

Historic Flashback

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In Manila, the Frieders, businessmen-brothers, were then managing their St. Helena Cigar Factory business before World War II broke out. They sought and got help and assistance from Paul V. McNutt, then the United States High Commissioner, and Commonwealth President Manuel L. Quezon in securing and processing of visas and passports for European Jews. They successfully coordinated their efforts in bringing in German and Austrian Jews in Europe for safe passage to the Philippines. The brothers' only regret was that had it not for the intervention of the war in the Pacific, more than 10,000 lives could have been saved. Frank Ephraim, who fled to the Philippines with his parents in 1931, wrote a book, "*Escape to Manila from Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror*

." It chronicled the saga of their work and the plight of other refugees. Stanley Karnow, noted historian and author

IN OUR IMAGE

, wrote the introduction.

Historic Reunion

It was one Sunday in February 2005 when the City of Cincinnati, Ohio, hosted a unique reunion of the rescued and their rescuers, a gathering of relatives and survivors of Holocaust to personally thank and express gratitude to the Frieder Brothers who played the role of saviors.

The Frieder Brothers brought their relatives to the Holocaust Memorial Center to witness the occasion. Also in attendance are the family members of the late Paul McNutt who was the last American High Resident Commissioner in the Philippines. Representing on behalf of the Philippines was Manuel Quezon III, MLQ's grandson.

On rescuing the Jews, was it not Nick Joaquin, Filipino writer who described Rizal, "THE WANDERING JEW"? Incidentally, the phrase is the title of a book, that happened to be a cherish possessions of our National Hero.

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The “imaginary meeting” between Jose Rizal and Raoul Wallenberg at Earl Bales Park is more than a passing fancy as we imagine Rizal so deeply proud of his people's compassion, hospitality, genuine sympathy and understanding of abused victims of injustice, racism and tyranny. He can tell the Swedish diplomat the “UNTOLD STORY” of the heroic efforts and humanitarian role his countrymen offering sanctuary to German and Austrian Jews who with all probability were to die in crematories but instead, they found a safe haven in the Philippines! And they did.

In short, Rizal would be so much please to know that his countrymen did not fail him or have forgotten his teachings, that "THERE ARE NO TYRANTS WHERE THERE ARE NO SLAVES."

Here is the REACTION from Knights of Rizal, Sir Barry Bowman, KGOR, then deputy commander for the United Kingdom. He wrote this commentary:

Dear Illustrious members of our Order.

It was nice to read something good for a change especially about Unity, and Brotherhood and obviously two important heroes who have helped change the world.

Being Jewish and as far as I am aware only 3 Jewish members of the Order are alive today, Henry Kissinger, myself and one other whose name fails me at the moment, are very proud of

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the wonderful genuine Filipinos who opened the doors to the refugees from Nazi Germany. More than 25,000 Jewish people settled in the Philippines during that horrendous time and it was after the war when a lot went back to their roots, we then had a large Jewish community of US Servicemen, and then after them came the Israeli settlers and businessmen. There is a beautiful synagogue in Sen. Gil Puyat Avenue which I visited a number of years ago and it was an early newspaper that was encased in a glass showing PHILIPPINES A SAFE HAVEN FOR JEWS. My heart was so full and overflowing with love for the Philippines I rushed back to UK armed with copies of this wonderful article.

To all Filipinos everywhere, I would like to say here and now that the Philippines is the only place in the world where there is no Anti-semitism and no one asks What are you? This is the most fantastic thing to a Jew to know that he is among friends where persecution because of religion is not alive in the Philippines.

As a member of the Knights, I am doubly please when I read about the two monuments. The Israeli Government has also a Dedication to Rizal; in Intramuros where he was incarcerated and also monuments and streets named after our Hero, Rizal himself spoke fluent Hebrew amongst the 22 languages he spoke.

To all Filipinos everywhere and especially our Knights of Rizal, let us look at these two great men and say, "Why are we having so much infighting? Why don't we say enough is enough? Let us get on with each others in the Brotherly love that we know and have seen emulate from these great men. Let Manila know we are displeased with their attitudes and power struggles. That is not what we joined for." Gentlemen let us salute the ideals of these two great men and tell Manila this is what we want, Peace Harmony and Unity.

Yours in Rizal,

Sir Barry Bowman, KGOR

Deputy Regional Commander for Europe

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