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GENERAL INSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT
THE ARMORED SCHOOL
Fort Knox, Kentucky

ADVANCED OFFICERS CLASS #1

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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: The Breach of Intramuros

SCOPE: The assault and capture of the mediaeval Walled City of Manila (Intramuros) together with brief notes on the historical background, prior events leading to the attack, and the general conclusions drawn therefrom.

41-57

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THE BREACH OF INTRAMUROS

Translated literally, the Spanish word intramuros means within walls. As referred to herein, it applies to the mediaeval fortress within the insular capital city of Manila on the island of Luzon in the Philippine group. In February of 1945, while in the process of liberating Manila, units of the American army assaulted and secured that fortress from a heterogeneous force of Japanese defenders in only one day of battle, a feat unparalleled in that city's turbulent history. The reason for this study is many-fold, as is its purpose. First, that one day of battle was entirely representative of the vicious street-to-street, building-to-building, and room-to-room type of combat encountered by American forces for the first time on the Pacific front. By portraying a comparatively detailed picture of the component part, a better understanding of the whole becomes more apparent to the interested observer. Secondly, though the action was a special situation in a secondary theater of operations which abounded in the unusual, it still conformed in general to basic principle as enunciated in field manuals and technical journals--further proof that fundamental military doctrine changes very little with time and place though the means of implementation may be at great variance. Thirdly, the historical ramifications provide an interesting backdrop to an otherwise completely academic discourse.

Intramuros

after the attack

Showing the southeast
portion of the wall



Intramuros

after the attack

Showing the gap in
the north wall



Intramuros

after the attack

**Showing the northeast
portion of the wall**



Intramuros

after the attack

Showing the southwest
portion of the wall



MAP OF INTRAMUROS, MANILA

SHOWING ENEMY INSTALLATIONS AS REPORTED BY PHOTO INTERPRETATION, GROUND OBSERVATION, PW STATEMENTS, GUERRILLA AND CIVILIAN INFORMANTS

SCALE - 1:10,000



LEGEND

SOURCE OF INFORMATION

- (P) Photo Interpretation
- (O) Observation
- (PW) Prisoner of War Statement
- (G) Guerrilla and Civilian Informant

- FOXHOLES
- ▣ PILLBOX
- XXXX BARBED WIRE
- ~~~~ TRENCH
- WATER TANKS
- GUN
- ◆ MORTAR OR HOWITZER
- ⊕ MACHINE GUN
- ⊗ OBSTACLE
- MINES
- ⊙ SUPPLIES
- ⊕ AMMUNITION
- ⊙ FUEL
- TUNNEL

PREPARED BY 37TH INFANTRY

History, Geogaphy, and Description:

Intramuros was the original fort built by the Spanish Conquistadores in the Manila Bay area in the year 1571. Now it is merely a small section of modern cosmopolitan Manila, the city having grown progressively through years of lucrative trade with both the East and the West.

Prior to the Japanese aerial depredations in late December of 1941, which left it in flames, the fortress-city was a veritable museum of Spanish architecture. Statues of the mediaeval great, such as Magellan, the pioneer world navigator, and Legaspi, the founder and first governor, graced the many churches, convents, and colleges founded by a watchful Catholicism. Situated strategically on the south bank of the Pasig River at the rivers juncture with Manila Bay, it long provided protection and haven in times of stress to the hardy pioneers who ventured there in search of fortune and high adventure.

Its thick stone walls, some two-thirds of which were intact in 1941, are about two and one half miles in circumference and rise to a height of about twenty five feet. Fort Santiago, the oldest portion of the wall, is situated on the extreme northwest of the Walled City, guarding the entrance to the Pasig River from the Bay. Originally the wall abutted the river on the north and the bay on the west, leaving only two land approaches on the south and east

which were protected by a deep moat. Later, the creation of the Port Area west of Fort Santiago on land reclaimed from the bay left the wall of the fort inland. In 1905 the moat was drained, filled, and converted into a municipal golf course and sunken gardens.

Even with these modern innovations the very construction of the wall itself (with its numerous firing ports, bastions, and abutments) still afforded the defender excellent flanking fields of fire as well as excellent observation of all land and water approaches.

From the beginning the fortress played a dominant role in the history of the struggling colony. Though menaced repeatedly by Chinese pirates, the Moros, and the Dutch in the 16th and 17th centuries, it was not until 1762 that the city succumbed for the first time to an invading force of British troops under General Draper and Admiral Cornish. Later, during the Spanish-American War, the city surrendered to Admiral Dewey after the Spanish fleet had been defeated at Cavite. Consequently, Spanish rule was terminated rather abruptly and the Philippines became a more or less willing protectorate of the United States.¹ This status quo remained unchanged until in recent times the fortress yielded to the ruthless force of modern total war when the Japanese occupied Manila on 9 June, 1942. Though its fourth surrender to a foreign power, the

1. Article, Philippine Islands, Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 21, pp. 752-753.

2. Article, Manila, Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 14, p. 806.

fortress had yet to be subdued by actual force of arms. It remained under Japanese domination until 23-24 February 1945, when elements of the 37th Infantry Division stormed and breached the mediaeval wall and in true infantry fashion closed with the enemy and destroyed or captured him.

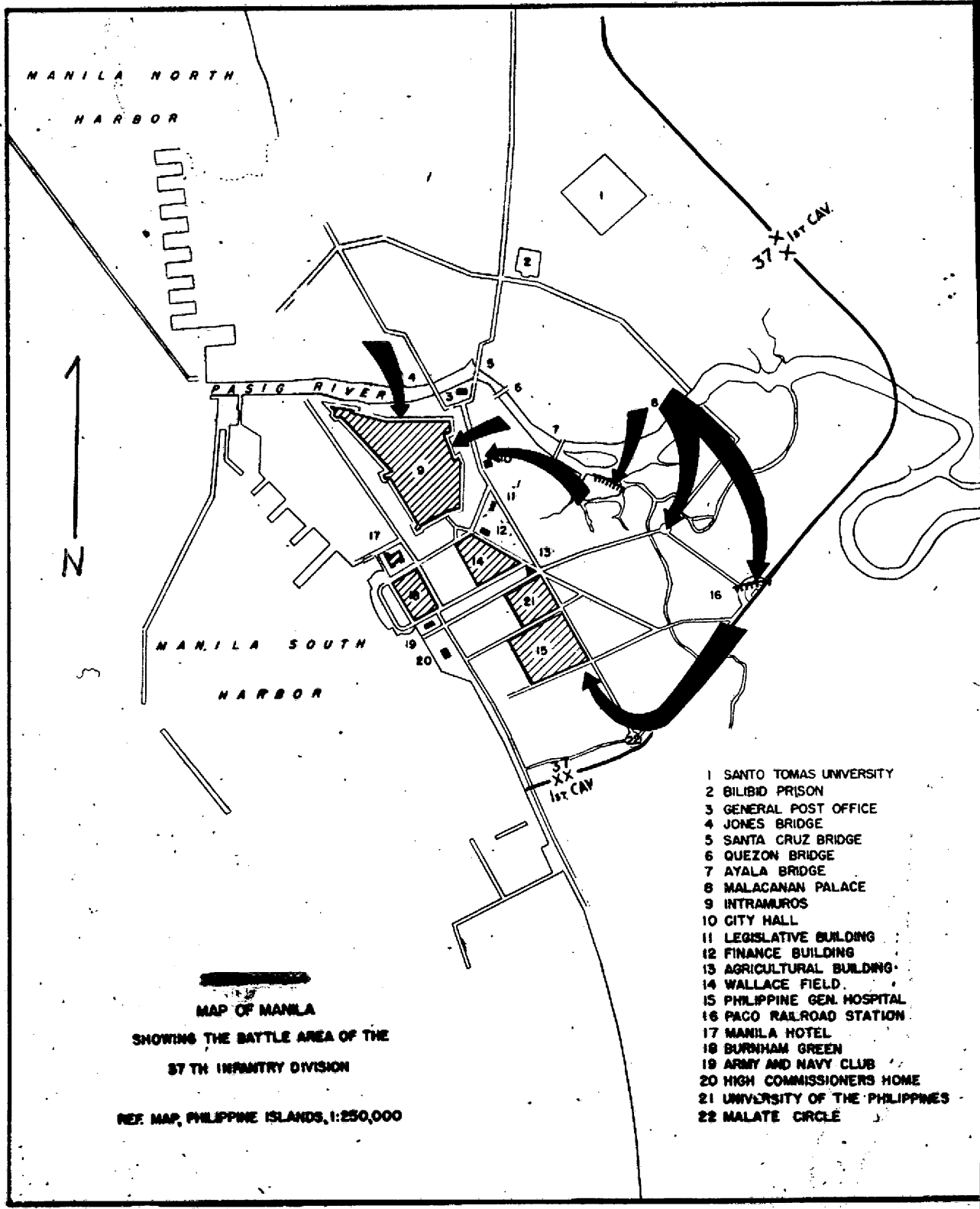
Situation Leading to the Assault:

Captured enemy documents indicate that the Japanese forces in Luzon had completed elaborate plans and troop dispositions for a stubborn defense of the island. These were based primarily on an attack on Batangas Province from the south and secondarily on an attack in the San Fernando-La Union area from the north. Their scheme of defense contemplated occupation of a series of defensive and delaying positions, the use of a "scorched earth" policy in withdrawal, and the use of the city of Manila as one of the final defense areas. The enemy had hoped to hold the Manila Bay area making it the turning point of the Luzon Campaign and, perhaps, the entire war. The garrison of the city alone comprised an estimated 18,000 men, with hundreds of guns of all caliber, and thousands of mines. Elaborate defense lines and strong points (composed of concrete, sandbag, and log reinforced pillboxes and bunkers) were constructed, facing generally south.

The Allied strategic decision to land in the Lingayen Gulf area

on northern Luzon completely outflanked the enemy's primary defenses and disrupted his entire continuity of plan. As a result, the advance to Manila from the north was accomplished with dispatch and mostly against only feeble and scattered resistance.

However, once the 37th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division entered the outskirts of Manila, the picture changed entirely. Composite enemy naval and army forces (composed of every conceivable type of Japanese line, service, and labor unit) resisted the advance fiercely from pillboxes, barricaded doors and windows, and from the very rubble in the streets. The hub of enemy resistance was located south of the Pasig River (which bisected the city horizontally from east to west) in the Intramuros area. The modern reinforced concrete government buildings south and east of the fortress proved very effective outguards securing the approaches from those two directions, while the river and bay did likewise from the north and west. Each of these buildings was a fort in itself. Doors and windows were barricaded. A variegated collection of army, naval, and anti-aircraft guns were sited to fire both outside the buildings and inside along corridors. Also, each housed a motley, conglomerate mass of determined defenders gathered from all lines of drift as the 37th Infantry Division drew the noose ever tighter on the north, east, and south of Intramuros and slowly moved into position for the final assault. Reduction necessitated the use of flame throwers, burning



MANILA NORTH
HARBOR

PASIG RIVER

MANILA SOUTH
HARBOR



37
XX
1st CAV.

37
XX
1st CAV.

MAP OF MANILA
SHOWING THE BATTLE AREA OF THE
37TH INFANTRY DIVISION

REF. MAP, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 1:250,000

- 1 SANTO TOMAS UNIVERSITY
- 2 BILIBID PRISON
- 3 GENERAL POST OFFICE
- 4 JONES BRIDGE
- 5 SANTA CRUZ BRIDGE
- 6 QUEZON BRIDGE
- 7 AYALA BRIDGE
- 8 MALACANAN PALACE
- 9 INTRAMUROS
- 10 CITY HALL
- 11 LEGISLATIVE BUILDING
- 12 FINANCE BUILDING
- 13 AGRICULTURAL BUILDING
- 14 WALLACE FIELD
- 15 PHILIPPINE GEN. HOSPITAL
- 16 PACO RAILROAD STATION
- 17 MANILA HOTEL
- 18 BURNHAM GREEN
- 19 ARMY AND NAVY CLUB
- 20 HIGH COMMISSIONERS HOME
- 21 UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
- 22 MALATE CIRCLE

oil, and demolitions in the most savage of close combat by friendly infantry coordinated with the support of direct-fire artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, and M-7's. By the evening of 22 February 1945, elements of the division had reduced the majority of these buildings to the south and east of Intramuros and the 145th Infantry Regiment was in position to launch a land attack on the east wall of the fortress itself. The 129th Infantry Regiment was poised opposite the north wall on the north side of the Pasig River ready to strike from that direction.

Plan of Assault:

The fact that the approaches to Intramuros were secured set the stage for the final assault and reduction of that last major vestige of resistance in Manila. But by no means was that assault an easy matter. The enemy, though shorn of his outposts, still enjoyed the advantage of occupying a strong fortified locality in comparative strength with a variety of weapons. The integration of his defensive fires was enhanced by the fact that any attacking force had to approach over a wide expanse of open ground on any of three sides (east, south, and west) and across the Pasig River on the fourth (north).

The problem of reducing the city-fortress was recognized by most echelons of command within the 37th Division in the early stages

of the attack on Manila. (It was located within that division's zone of advance.) When the division reached the north bank of the Pasig River, automatic weapons were emplaced in the factories and buildings to take under fire any targets of opportunity or areas of activity noted in the vicinity of the north wall. This holding force augmented by M-7's and tank destroyers was maintained by various units of the division until the Walled City was secured. At the same time, observation posts were established and visual reconnaissance was initiated for crossing sites over the river. Many plans and procedures were considered and in turn discarded. A recommendation from the 145th Infantry Regiment for an assault crossing from the Estero de la Reina on the north bank into a breach noted in the north wall in the vicinity of the Mint Building coordinated with a land attack from the east on the south bank of the river was ultimately adopted by the division.

To facilitate the land attack on the east wall and to secure the remainder of Manila south of the Pasig, an amphibious crossing of the river was made in the vicinity of Malacanan Palace, home of the Philippine president, approximately 2000 yards upstream from the fortress. During more than two weeks of the bitterest of fighting, the division pivoted on its north flank and wheeled slowly southwestward in a turning movement toward the south and east walls of Intramuros. Except for a few isolated strong points (the Legisla-

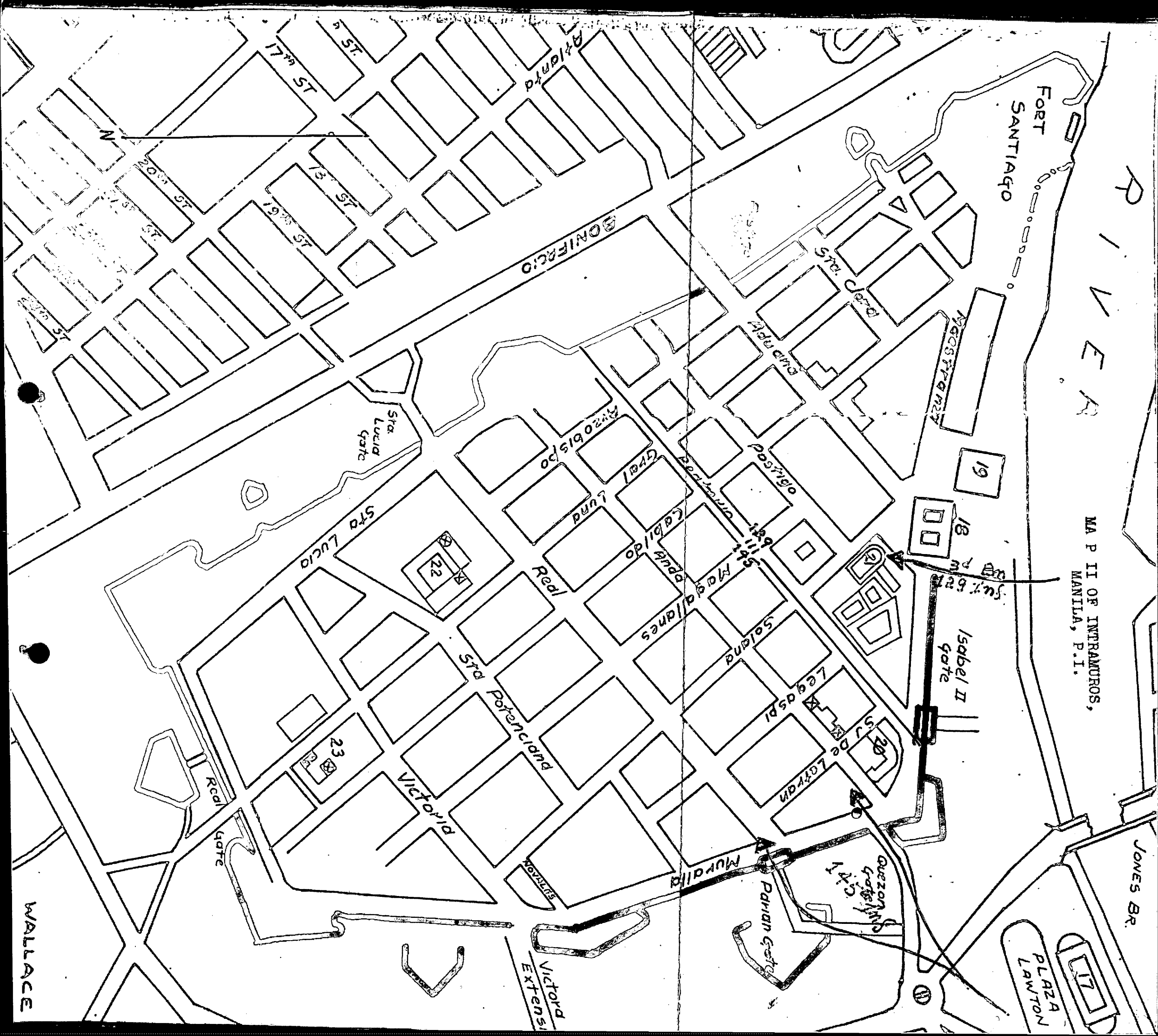
tive, Finance, and Agriculture Buildings) the cordon was being drawn tightly around the Walled City and the major units were massing for the final assault.

Field Order 30 was issued by the 37th Division providing for the assault upon Intramuros commencing at 230830 February. The 129th Infantry was to attack from the north after an amphibious crossing of the Pasig River. The 145th Infantry was to attack overland from the northeast on the south bank of the river. The 148th Infantry, in place, was to provide fire support from the north bank of the river. The 1st Brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division (attached to the 37th Division) was to continue its advance north along the shore of Manila Bay and secure the Port Area west of Intramuros, thus completing the encirclement of the fortress. Division artillery (reinforced by Corps artillery) was to coordinate all large caliber direct-fire and indirect-fire weapons to provide a preparation from 0730-0830.¹

The 145th Infantry was to assault the Quezon and Parian Gates (see Map II of Intramuros, Manila) and planned to move initially in an echeloned column of two battalions, leading with the 2nd Battalion. The 3rd Battalion was to contain the enemy forces in the Agriculture, Finance, and Legislative Buildings and to support the attack by fire

1. Report After Action, Operations of the 37th Infantry Division, Luzon, P.I., p. 77.

MAP OF INTRAMUROS,
MANILA, P.I.



FORT
SANTIAGO

RIVER

HOSPITAL

19

18

Sub. bet. 18 & 19

Isabel II gate

JONES BR.

PLAZA
LAWTON

17

Quezon
C. A. C.

Darin Gate

MURDIA

Victoria
Extens.

WALLACE

BONIFACIO

Ataraya

17th ST
15th ST
13th ST
11th ST
9th ST
7th ST
5th ST
3rd ST

Sta. Clara

Alvarado

Arzobispo

Gravel

Luna

Red

Magallanes

Postigo

Salanda

Legaspi

ST. DE LOYAN

Sta. Potenciana

Victoria

Real gate

Sta. Lucia gate

Sta. Lucia

23

22

20

21

N

10

from positions along Taft Avenue. The 129th Infantry was to assault the north wall in the vicinity of the Mint Building and planned to move in a column lead by the 3rd Battalion.

The boundary between the two regiments was initially Beaterio Street, giving the 129th Infantry the northwest portion of the fortress and the 145th Infantry the northeast and east portion. The area from Beaterio Street to the south wall and from Magallanes Street to the west wall, about one half of the total area of the Walled City, was left unassigned. Further reassignment of boundaries was to depend upon progress.

Execution of Plan:

During the night 22-23 February many of the heavy caliber direct-fire weapons were emplaced and thereafter were fired intermittently at predesignated targets. Twelve 105mm howitzers and six 155mm howitzers were lined up north and east of the fortress for direct fire. Tanks, tank destroyers, and M-7's were assigned position areas and target areas. The 637th Tank Destroyer Battalion, firing from the north bank of the Pasig River, had the express mission of making breaks in the south embankment of the river to afford better footing for the debarkation of the 129th Infantry assault troops. The 155mm howitzers were used mostly on the north bank, also, to fire at the northwest bastion and into

the gap in the north wall in the vicinity of the Mint Building, the area the 129th Infantry was to seize and attack through after making its amphibious crossing. All of the available machine guns of both the 129th and 148th Infantry Regiments (about 30 in number) were in position on the north bank of the river in buildings and other points or vantage covering fields of fire in the vicinity of the north wall containing observed enemy activity. Four of these guns were assigned an overall mission of firing at targets of opportunity before and during the assault. Throughout the night, the 3rd Battalion of the 145th Infantry from positions along Taft Avenue, engaged in a continuous fire fight with the isolated enemy garrisons in the Agriculture, Finance, and Legislative Buildings, thus containing that force completely.

Promptly at 0730 the next morning all support weapons opened fire in what was beyond a doubt the most highly coordinated and devastating preparation of the entire Luzon operation. Artillery, tanks, tank destroyers, M-7's, mortars, and machine guns fired according to the prearranged division support plan, each laid on specific target areas in order to cover the entire fortress with a thundering crescendo of steel and destruction. The two initial points of assault, the Mint Building area on the north and the Quezon-Parian Gate area on the east, received special attention from direct-fire units. As late as 0815, the heavily barricaded Quezon Gate appeared to withstand all efforts to destroy it. At this point, the fires of the M-7's of the 145th Infantry were

switched from other targets and concentrated on the gate, blasting a hole in the barricades without which the assault of the 145th Infantry would have been futile.

At 0830 fires were lifted on a prearranged red smoke signal and the Infantry assault phase commenced. The rumble of the big guns still reverberated in the distance as the assault troops of the 145th Infantry raced from the vicinity of the Post Office Building across the barren expanse northeast of the east wall toward the Quezon and Parian Gates. At the same time, engineer assault boats carrying troops from the 3rd Battalion, 129th Infantry, appeared from the Estero de la Reina and moved rapidly toward the gap in the north wall. The fortress lay silent and smoldering, still shocked by the force of the preparation. The first assault troops of the 145th Infantry arrived at the east wall at 0833 and the first troops of the 129th Infantry debarked from the boats at 0836.¹ 4.2 inch mortars laid down heavy smoke concentrations in front of the isolated Finance and Legislative Buildings just as soon as the main preparation ceased at 0830. Ten minutes later, division artillery units smoked and neutralized the western half of the fortress to prevent observation and reinforcement of the points of penetration. This fire proved most effective and was continued until friendly troops reached the danger area.

1. Report After Action, Operations of the 37th Infantry Division Luzon, P.I., p. 79.

Company F, 145th Infantry crashed through the Quezon Gate at 0835, the first military unit in history to successfully breach the mediaeval wall of Intramuros. No enemy fire was received from the east wall itself, but a lone machine gun fired from the south end of Jones Bridge (over the Pasig) without effect until silenced later by flanking action. Heavy machine gun fire received from the Parian Bastion (situated about 200 feet east of the east wall and designed to cover and protect the Parian Gate from outside the wall) was eliminated by Company G after intense fighting and by 1030 the Parian Gate was secured. The 1st Battalion followed Company G through the Parian Gate, made contact with the 2nd Battalion to the north, and fanned out to the south and west. In the north, the amphibious crossing of the Pasig River was executed without enemy opposition and troops of the 129th Infantry moved through the north wall without a loss.

Hostile resistance mounted rapidly as the two regiments moved westward and soon developed into a house-to-house and room-to-room battle. Grenades, flame throwers, and demolitions were used in close combat to advance from building to building. The full effect of the friendly artillery preparation became more apparent the farther the assault troops advanced. The fact that no fire was received from the walls initially was indicative of what was to follow. Organized enemy cross fires at street intersections were

disorganized to the point that only isolated guns remained (though there were a great many of them). Obstructions, mines, and barricades were destroyed, disrupting again the enemy continuity of defense. The narrow mediaeval streets were filled with rubble and debris caused by the intense fire. Footing was both difficult and dangerous. In the 145th Infantry zone the regimental mine platoon together with direct support engineers cleared the way foot by foot, for the employment of tanks and M-7's. After a path had been tested for mines, tank dozers were used to remove the debris and rubble so that M-7's and tanks could advance closer to support the infantry action. This fact, of course, precluded the use of armor in comparative mass and made the mop-up phase a purely infantry problem supported almost entirely by organic infantry weapons.

Both regiments made early physical contact with each other in the vicinity of Beaterio Street, the regimental boundry, and pushed on from there. In the 129th Infantry zone, Fort Santiago was the strongest point of resistance. The regiment took possession of the fort very quickly but did not subdue it completely until late in the evening. The fighting centered around the many dungeons, tunnels, recesses, and walls (averaging about 20 feet thick). Close combat weapons were used profusely in the slow, vicious mop-up of isolated enemy groups as the battle progressed from dungeon to dungeon and

tunnel to tunnel.

In the 145th Infantry zone though resistance stiffened as the regiment drove westward and southward movement continued. At 1045 the regimental north-south boundary was extended from Magallanes Street to Cabildo Street and at 1225 was modified again to include the entire fortress south of Beaterio Street.

In the early afternoon the attack of the 145th Infantry was delayed for several hours while about 2000 civilians streamed from the St. Augustine Cathedral and Del Monico Church. These refugees, composed almost entirely of women and children, had been held captive by the Japanese and had been released to confuse the attack and to gain time to reform shattered defenses. Few men were observed in the group. The fact appears to be well established that the men had been murdered previously, removed to Fort Santiago, and burned in one of the dungeons. Filipino bodies were discovered by the 129th Infantry in the fort stacked five layers deep like so much cord wood in a room 25 feet square.¹

After the civilians had been evacuated, the attack was resumed. The doors and windows of the church were heavily barricaded and automatic weapons were sited to cover all approaches. The ensuing fire fight was heavy and intense but with the aid of a few tanks and

1. Report After Action, Operations of the 37th Infantry Division, Luzon, P.I., p. 81.

M-7's, the enemy positions were first neutralized, then destroyed.

By late evening of 23 February most of Intramuros was secured. The entire north wall, the northern portion of the west wall, and the east wall to a point below the Victoria Gate were in friendly possession. Physical contact had been made with the 1st Cavalry Brigade opposite 16th Street in the Port area (radio contact had been maintained during the day as the brigade attacked northward along Manila Bay). To all extents and purposes though several isolated garrisons of the enemy remained active and though the mop-up of secured areas was not completed as yet, Intramuros had suffered its first military defeat by actual force of arms.

In the 145th Infantry zone the attack was continued throughout the night, with both the 1st and 2nd Battalions reaching the west wall in several places. By applying continuous pressure, organized resistance was compressed into the southwest portion of the fortress. The south and west gates were covered by fire to deny exit to the trapped enemy. With the dawn, mop-up operations continued with added vigor and by 1000 the entire Walled City was in friendly hands except the South Bastion, west and south of the Real Gate. This latter position, sometimes referred to as the Aquarium, was surrounded by dense mine fields and garrisoned by a strong force armed with all types of automatic weapons. Company C was given the mission of coordinating the destruction of this last center of resistance. The

tactics used were the same as those used to secure the initial penetrations in the wall except, of course, on a much smaller scale because of the size of the bastion and its limited avenues of ingress. The position was contained until a path was cleared through the debris for the employment of a single M-7 in direct fire support (all that could be employed because of the extensive mine fields).

At 1600, Company C using two platoons (about 57 men) and supported only by organic infantry weapons, stormed and captured the position with a loss of only three men wounded. Within the bastion 115 Japanese soldiers lay dead amid the rubble of assorted weapons and sundry military accoutrements--an object lesson of the force and effectiveness of coordinated fire power.

By evening of 24 February 1945, all organized resistance in the immediate Intramuros area had been eliminated. This included the entire Port area west of the Fortress cleared by the 1st Cavalry Brigade to complete the encirclement and to prevent the escape of the Japanese defender to the West.

Conclusions:

For the sake of analysis, the attack on Intramuros can be divided into three main phases. First, the preliminary or maneuver phase. Secondly, the penetration or breaching phase. Thirdly, the consolidation or mop-up phase.

The first phase, of course, occurred prior to the actual assault and ^{was} entirely orthodox in concept. A strong point was encountered, contained frontally, bypassed, and eventually encircled. The maneuver of the 37th Division isolated the fortress and set the stage for the two-pronged assault which followed shortly thereafter. During the period the fortress was practically impotent. True, it served as a base of operations and harassed the friendly advance by intermittent small caliber artillery and 90mm mortar fire, but the bulk of its support weapons were sited for the immediate defense of the mediaeval wall (See Map I of Intramuros, Manila). Consequently, the fortress, itself, offered only token resistance while the division wheeled into position for the final assault.

The second phase, the breaching of the wall, was the most important and difficult of the three. At the start of the period the wall of the fortress was strongly held as evidenced by the failure of a large patrol from the 145th Infantry to successfully probe the northeast defenses because of enemy fire. The problem was to neutralize the heavy enemy fire from the wall long enough to provide sufficient time for the assault troops to cross the exposed areas outside the wall and to force penetrations. This necessitated the closest of coordination at all levels of command and especially between assault infantry and supporting artillery. Success was achieved primarily because of two factors, fire power and timing.

The support preparation, meticulously prepared and executed, completely neutralized the assigned target areas and in a great many instances destroyed enemy firing positions and barricades. Most important of all, the devastating force of the fire completely stunned and shocked the enemy into temporary inactivity. By split second timing, the assault troops exploited that temporary lapse and secured the penetrations as planned before the enemy could recover and resist.

The third phase, the consolidation, was an infantry battle entirely, fought for the most part with only close combat weapons. During this period, the individual soldier carried the fight to the enemy from building to building. He proved again the axiom that man is the only fundamental instrument in war; that though other instruments may change or fail he always remains relatively constant.¹ It may be of interest to note that during the bitter fighting, the Japanese defenders used many of the characteristic ruses American troops had come to expect from them after several years of island-hopping. Japanese soldiers appeared dressed entirely in American uniforms in an effort to effect displacement to more favorable locations. Later, the white flag appeared followed by small arms fire to catch the unwary soldier exposed. Throughout the battle, the Japanese use of civilians to confuse the attack and to gain time was distin-

1. Field Manual 100-5, Chapter 4, p. 27.

guished by an utter and callous disregard for their lives and welfare. This fact was further demonstrated by several apparent evidences of civilian atrocities.

Since the first battle in recorded history, it always has been axiomatic that any defensive position can be reduced if the attacker is prepared and willing to pay the price for success. Of course, that price varies greatly with the skill and experience of the principals involved. By the expert use of aggressive maneuver, mass, and coordinated fire power, the advantages inherent to the defenders of Intramuros were reduced to the absolute zero and completely nullified. In the final analysis, the price for success was extremely cheap when compared with the enemy cost for failure--total defeat in detail.

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