

The Filipinos in the forgotten Korean war

by MAILA AGER
Inquirer.net

MANILA — Unknown to many, former President Fidel Ramos was one of the 7,500 Filipino soldiers who took part in the Korean war. At 17, former Senator Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr. was a war correspondent to Korea.

Their stories, however, remain untold to many—even to Carlo Cruz, a 25-year-old film director and son of Philippine Ambassador to South Korea Luis Cruz who later agreed to do a movie about it.

“When I heard documentary and war, I said no. I’m not going to do it. And they left me a piece of paper, which I read. It’s about five-paragraph long and I was basically bored with the first three paragraphs,” the younger Cruz said.

“But the fourth paragraph was about, if I’m not mistaken, about Fidel Ramos and his contribution as a second lieutenant fresh from West Point University in Virginia and I said to myself, why didn’t I know that?”

The last paragraph, he said, was the deciding factor.

“It was a picture of a 500-peso bill. At the back of it was a picture of that young Ninoy Aquino, 17 years old, a war correspondent to Korea. Now, the bill has been in print for the last 26 or 23 years?”

“I asked a lot of people, did you know that Fidel Ramos was in the Korean War and that Ninoy Aquino was a war correspondent? Majority of them said no. Only one of them said yes and he was a war junkie,” he said.

After eight shooting days, the movie entitled *The Forgotten War*, was shown at the National Theater of Korea last April 12 in time for the 60th anniversary celebration of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Seoul.

It will be shown for the first time in Manila this June.

The movie, consisting of four separate parts, depicts Filipinos heroism and bravery during the war between 1950 and 1953.

The first part was about brotherhood—a story of Captain Conrado Yap and his best friend, Lieutenant Jose Artiaga, who both bore a “big-

ger sacrifice” during the war.

Ramos’s success story in returning the 44 soldiers of his platoon alive was the second part of the film. He was hailed one of the heroes of the Battle of Hill Eerie.

“It is about Fidel Ramos, the birth of a leader, a young 22-year-old Fidel Ramos, fresh from West Point Virginia,” said the film director.

“He was short, he was skinny. And one of the historians told me that he wasn’t really the favorite at that time. And I’d like the people to see that like us, he was just a human being before he became one of the leaders of our country, that he too felt great human emotions,” he said.

Before shooting the film, Carlos and his father met with Ramos to ask for help in fleshing out details.

And the former leader, the director said, was so happy to learn that his contribution in the war has been relived.

The third part of the movie was about a “strict” platoon leader, who survived a night battle against the Chinese.

And the last story was about a sergeant, who fell in love with a Korean woman. The sergeant recently passed away leaving his wife, four children, and 12 grandchildren behind.

The wife, however, has stayed in the Philippines running her own business.

Carlo hopes that the movie would not only raise awareness but would also strengthen the bilateral relations between the two countries.

“The Koreans, unlike us, have not forgotten the sacrifices of the Filipinos at that time,” he said.

He recalled a Korean businessman in the Philippines who came up to him after watching the movie, telling him how proud he is “to be working side by side” with Filipinos.

“For me, that did it. I knew right away, I have shown everybody what Filipinos are like. Not only are they romantic, good looking, talented, fighters, brave men but people who look out for one another as well as their neighbor, South Korea,” said the young Cruz.

“That’s what I want to get through anyway—for people to see the bravery and the love of Filipinos,” he said. ■

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Ermita tells Gonzalez: Shut up...

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self,” he added.

‘Closed issue’

Malacañang said there is nothing more to discuss about the transfer of Gonzalez to the office of the Chief Presidential Legal Counsel and his replacement by Devanadera.

“The first thing I did this

morning is to ensure that the office to be occupied by Secretary Gonzalez here as chief presidential legal counsel is ready and it is ready at anytime.” Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said, adding that it’s now “a closed issue.”

He said that Gonzalez should be allowed to take his time in

moving out of his office as this part of ensuring a smooth transition.

“I can imagine that we are just going through the nuances of the turnover,” Ermita said.

“So we should not give too much importance on why he is still there and not here,” he added. (Philstar.com)

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