

most popular form of transportation seemed to be converted jeeps with ornate canopies supported on gilded columns, and about twelve seats. They looked like runaways from a merry-go-round.

We passed the ruins of the ancient walled city and the remains of old Spanish churches. Across the new MacArthur Bridge we found ourselves in the shopping district. There were some fine buildings and shops, and once again it was difficult to believe that only a few years before there had been scarcely an undamaged building in Manila. The city hall, the main post office, every one of the big, light-coloured buildings was new.

The shops were inviting but we had no time to explore them. It was probably just as well. The driver spoke of diamonds at 500 dollars a carat, shirts at £3/10/- each, and shoes at £12 a pair. I asked him how much the average worker earned. He said a clerk got about £10 per week, but added that everyone made extra money by buying and selling and various profitable sidelines. He owned six new taxis and made about £200 per month.

We pulled up at a traffic light, and a civilian on a bicycle drew just ahead of us. From his trouser pocket the butt of a revolver protruded. I had noticed signs everywhere, even in the Manila Hotel, saying "Check Your Firearms" and "No Firearms Allowed." The taxi-man explained that in the Philippines the gun is the tongue of argument. Nearly every day they find at least one corpse stuffed in a public garbage can.

The better class homes, we observed, had high walls surrounding the courtyard in front of them. If a householder looks out of the window and sees a stranger within the walls he is entitled to shoot first and investigate later.

We got back to the hotel to find the taxis loading up for the airport. Once more we swept along the smooth road by the sea. The breeze through the open windows cooled us, but as soon as we got out the perspiring began again. As the big plane gathered speed along the runway the air began to hiss through the ventilators and we shot up over the rusty, corrugated iron roofs of the shacks around the airfield. We climbed and turned slowly. The iron roofs gave way to the coloured tiles of pleasant villas and the concrete masses of commercial buildings.

The harbour was littered with half-sunken shipping. Fishing traps in the form of arrows gave the muddy sea the appearance of a convict's shirt. In the haze across the bay lurked the grim, grey shape of Corregidor, which the Filipinos are considering re-naming MacArthur Island.

We headed southwards across Luzon. I opened the front of my shirt further and focused the cool air jet from the ventilator on to my bare chest. I felt I could breathe again.

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N.Z. LISTENER, APRIL 18, 1952.

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