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These newspapers, in California, announce the fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942. Image online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

*If you break our rules,
we will kill you
or we will do something worse.*

"They did something worse."

Henry Wilayto

Survivor

Bataan Death March

Within days of the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the Empire of Japan bombed the Philippines. At the time, that country—a Spanish possession for three hundred years until America defeated Spain in the Spanish-American War—was an ill-defended American possession (set to become independent on July 4, 1946) which Japan desired to possess.

One of the reasons the Philippines (including its main island of Luzon) was defended in mere “caretaker fashion,” by the United States, was a 1921 treaty between America and Japan. That agreement included a Non-fortification Clause which the U.S. heeded but Japan ignored.

As America was disarming in the Philippines, Japan was enhancing her military might. Japan’s December 1941 actions against the Philippines, and those that followed, led to disaster for thousands of American and Filipino forces stationed in the country.

This story is about the plight of those men—and of the dramatic rescue of 511 emaciated Americans and one British civilian from the Cabanatuan prisoner of war camp.

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Media Stream



Japan Attacks the Philippines

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