

October Liberation of the Philippines

The tropical islands of mountains, sugarcane, rice, mongoose, lizards, long-tailed monkeys, brightly-colored birds in multi-green rain forests— all surrounded by over 2000 species of fish including the whale shark— fell to titanic invasion in 1944. Leyte had a population of over a million people. As you can see by our pictures, World War II was the first great amphibious conflict in history. Cartoon below reads: "I don't suppose you'd know where the Post Office is?"



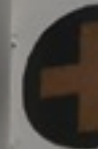
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When MacArthur stood on the beach upon his return, he made a famous worldwide broadcast, covered by the media. In deep emotion, he voiced: "People of the Philippines: I have returned! By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil, soil consecrated in the blood of our two people. We have come, dedicated and committed to the task of destroying every vestige of enemy control over your daily lives and of restoring...the liberties of your people." He then said, "the hour of your redemption is here." [p 199 MacArthur (center) after wading through the surf.] The time was two o'clock in the afternoon. He introduced the new Philippine President, Sergio Osmeña, and called on the population to rally with him in "flinging out the enemy."

The battles fought on Leyte — an island some 115 miles long and 15-45 miles wide, depending on where you might be — were short, with heavy losses for the enemy. Leyte is largely mountainous, has small jungle valleys, yet also a broad fertile valley in the northeast which fades out into the east coast. The primary objective: the west coast of Leyte. With the movement proceeding inland, small available airstrips were repaired and others were opened up.

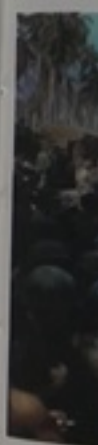
The initial front lines stretched some 17 miles across, with the 1st Calvary Division on the north and the veteran 7th on the south ends. Drenching rains hampered air operations. This made movement slow and difficult in the valleys, without much air support. This was a problem that plagued U.S. operations expecting quick thrusts.

The U.S. did not have complete control of the air over Leyte and the Central Visayas. Strangely, neither did the Japanese. Ground operation depended on the infantry, the old fashioned way of combat. Like their GI counterparts in Europe, they endured constant rain, but, unlike Europe, it fell warm. The tropical water formed high humidity and many times, it rained 35 inches in less than forty days. U.S.



33rd North

1st Los Negro



Ling

Luzon