

SALESIANS IN THE PHILIPPINES (1949-1963): HISTORICAL NOTES

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1. Introduction

The aim of the Seminar is to present the beginnings of the Salesian Presence in East Asia and Oceania. The Philippines, as part of this Salesian Region, has also its beginnings and origins from the first Salesian Presence in East Asia: China. For in the two times that the Salesians started to root themselves in the Philippines, they came from China to negotiate and to concretise what they negotiated.

For this, I wish to present certain notes of the history of the Salesian Presence in the Philippines. These historical notes could help us reflect in our on-going Salesian history. For what might be a record and event of the past continues to question us of our current doing.

The points I treat have been chosen among many aspects of the Salesian beginnings in the Philippines. They are documented as well. I consider them relevant to the study of the Salesians' history in my country. These notes, which might not be unique, might also be shared by the other Salesian presences in Asia and elsewhere.

I limit my study of the Salesian beginnings in the Philippines from the moment of the negotiation by Turin with Manila so that the Salesians come, to the actual start of the Salesian work until the creation of the Salesian Philippine Province: hence, from 1949 to 1963 ca. Our notes of history include the following: (1) the negotiations for foundations; (2) the first works started by the Salesians.

The method I used is historical. That is, I based my research on documents that are mostly archival. Then, I tried to expose the results of the research, while explaining and clarifying the more significant elements of the exposition. Finally, I made an effort to be critical and analytical, by going to the historical significance of the notes presented.

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2. Situation

In the second and third quarters of the 1900's, period of the establishment of the Salesians in the Philippines, we find the canonization of two influential saints of the Salesian Family: that of Maria Domenica Mazzarello (24 June 1951) and of the boy-saint Domenico Savio (12 June 1954). The Salesian Society itself underwent several "traumatic events": the martyrdom (25 February 1930) of Bishop Luigi Versiglia (1873-1930) and Fr. Callisto Caravario (1903-1930); the massacre of clergy and religious which included Salesians in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939); the persecution, imprisonment and forced migration of Salesians from Czechoslovakia (April 1950), Lithuania, Hungary on account of the Communist persecution of religion. This last was also the experience of the Salesians in China (March 1950).¹

In the same period, the Salesian Society had re-launched its missionary thrust after a lapse of almost eight years, on account of the Second World War. Fr. Carlo Braga (1889-1971), as Provincial of China and then as Visitatore of the Philippines, twice preached in 1952 and 1961 in the celebrative send-off to new Salesian missionaries in Turin. Moreover, the Salesians have already begun to work in almost twelve nations in East Asia (Macao [1906], China [1910], Japan [1926], Hong Kong, Thailand and Timor [1927], Myanmar [1938], Laos and Vietnam [1941], Philippines and Taiwan [1951], South Korea [1954], and much later Indonesia [1985]).

In East Asia, we find the establishment of four Religious Institutes founded by Salesians: the Sisters Announcers of the Lord (12 December 1936, China, by Msgr. Luigi Versiglia), the Caritas Sisters of Miyazaki (15 August 1937, Japan, by Fr. Vincenzo Cimatti and Fr. Antonio Cavoli), the Sisters Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (7 December 1937, Thailand, by Msgr. Gaetano Pasotti), and the Daughters of the Queenship of Mary Immaculate (3 December 1954, Thailand, by Fr. Carlo Della Torre).²

We have a transition in the leadership of the Salesian Society, with the death of Fr. Pietro Ricaldone (+25 November 1951) and with the election of Fr. Renato Ziggiotti (1 August 1952, General Chapter XVII). The former, during the rectorship of Fr. Filippo Rinaldi (1856-1922), made an extraordinary visitation of East Asia (1926-1927) where he visited Japan,

¹ Cf Morand WIRTH, *Da Don Bosco ai nostri giorni. Tra storia e nuove sfide (1815-2000)*. Roma 2000, pp. 391-393.

² *The Salesian Family of Don Bosco*. Roma 2000, pp. 195-198.

Thailand, Burma and China. Death would catch up with him even before the negotiations for the coming of the Salesians to the Philippines were finalized. Nonetheless, he was not one who was ignorant of the Philippines. He had been in Manila in October 1927, as guest of the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines.³ His successor, Fr. Renato Ziggotti, definitely did not have much idea on the Philippines. But it was this latter who made the final decision for the Salesians to go to the Philippines. Later, he would visit the Philippines in April 1955, as Rector Major.

When the Philippines began as a Delegation dependent on the China Province in 1951, there were an estimated 15,182 Salesians, 1,182 novices and 1,076 houses. In 1963, when the Philippine Delegation became independent as a Province, there were about 20,562 Salesians, 1,285 novices and 1,327 houses in the world.

Upon the arrival of the Salesians in the Philippines in 1951, there was the on-going growing influence of Protestantism (Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Evangelicals, Adventists, etc.) brought about by American colonialism. Moreover, the local religious sects (Aglipay and Iglesia ni Kristo) were ever more active in the work of proselytism. There were new male Religious Orders (CICM, MSC, OSB, La Salle) at work, beside the traditional ones (OSA, OFM, SJ, OP, OSAR).⁴ They came to help in the maintenance of the faith in the Philippines, as well as to help stem the "transfer" of Catholics to Protestantism, the same urgent reason which Fr. Braga claimed why the Salesians should come to the Philippines. They worked mostly for the education of the very young population of the country. The majority, however, schooled the paying sector. Private education, whose cost was definitely high, was in fact controlled

³ From Macao, Fr. Ricaldone made a two-day visit to Manila in the Philippines, from 6 to 7 October 1927. He was received by the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, Archbishop Guglielmo Piani, Fr. Louis La Ravoire Morrow and Br. Giovanni Castelli, all three Salesians. Fr. Ricaldone and Abp. Piani already had met once in Mexico, in 1913. The purpose of Fr. Ricaldone's visit to Manila was to see a Church (Binondo?), which was being offered to the Salesians. He also made contact with the Benedictines, Jesuits and Dominicans, and saw the Cathedral of Manila where he witnessed how the devotion to Mary Help of Christians was practised. Cf Francesco RASTELLO, *Don Pietro Ricaldone. IV successore di Don Bosco*, I. Roma 1976, pp. 419-420.

⁴ Earlier, Rome had appealed to Religious Orders to reinforce the Philippine Church, which was under attack. Pope Pius XI exhorted Religious not only to work for education, the establishment of religious communities, but especially the cultivation of local vocations ("Rerum Ecclesiae", 28 February 1926). Cf Hubert JEDIN (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, XI/1. Milano 1975, pp. 300-303.

by these good-intentioned religious. Some of them, though, worked in mission areas, something that the Salesians never dared to venture in the Philippines.

The Philippine Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Guglielmo Piani (1875-1956), who was a Salesian, had been recently transferred to Mexico in 1949. It was said that he had influenced greatly the development of the Philippine Church in the latter part of the first half of the 20th century.⁵ His stint as papal representative in the Philippines could not but help the Salesians be positively looked upon during the negotiations for their coming and in their actual arrival.⁶ Nonetheless, Archbishop Piani's successor, Archbishop Egidio Vagnozzi, definitely favoured and personally intervened, in order that the sons of Don Bosco be in the Philippines.

It was a post-war situation when the Salesians came to the Philippines. Both the Japanese invasion and occupation and the American liberation of the Philippines had resulted into widespread destruction. The Philippines had recently received its "independence" from the Americans (1945); but it was in a moment of transition from a government still tutored by the U.S.A.

There, too, was a wide discrepancy between the rich and the poor in a country that was largely agricultural. The government continued to favour the big landowners at the expense of the landless poor. The Communist threat in the Archipelago was real, on account of the gross social inequality. At the same time, the country was striving to keep in tune with the growing industrialization in the Asian region. The economic powers, in search of new grounds to sustain their economic needs, saw the Philippines as capable of sharing their industrial efficacy, in as much as it was adequately western and updated with its abilities.⁷ The Philippines needed technical workers. The Salesians were prepared to make the young Filipino technically capable and who needed to prepare themselves to work

⁵ Gioventù Missionaria (Settembre 1948) 11: "L'Eccellentissimo Arcivescovo lavora al servizio della Chiesa in quelle 7,000 isole che, su un territorio vasto quanto l'Italia conta fra i 19,000,000 di abitanti, oltre 15,000,000 di cattolici. In 26 anni di zelante ministero S. E. ha avuto la gioia di vedere quasi raddoppiate le Diocesi, ora in numero di 15: mentre due nuove Prefetture Apostoliche, con un'altra eretta in precedenza, curano l'evangelizzazione di 712,579 pagani".

⁶ Cf FRANCISCO CASTELLANOS, *Un Gran Corazon. Mons. Guillermo Piani*. Mexico 1991; DANIEL ZURITA, *Mons. Guillermo Piani, Salesiano, Formador, Superior, Delegato Apostolico*. México 2002.

⁷ Cf ROSARIO M. CORTES - CELESTINA P. BONCAN - RICARDO T. JOSE, *The Filipino Saga. History as Social Change*. Quezon City 2000.

in the factories. Even the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines showed sensitiveness and concern to the plight of the poor, especially of the young. For this, they welcomed any help, including the Salesians', which could answer their concern.

Manila had its first Filipino Archbishop in Gabriel Reyes. The Manila Council (7 to 25 January 1953) helped to give a clearer direction to the Philippine Church in the capital. The establishment of the "Mission Society of the Philippines" (1964) declared the special missionary vocation of the Filipino Clergy.⁸ But the Church also showed a particular attention to the Chinese who had also migrated to the Philippines on account of the Communist persecution. Of 129 seminarians who escaped from China, 113 were ordained priests, of which 66 remained to minister to their co-nationals. Even schools and parishes were established for their care.⁹

In China, in July 1950, the Communists, who would later create a National Church that effectively resulted into schism from Rome, had started to take over and suppress the Chinese Church that was growing. This meant the expulsion of foreign missionaries too, after mock trials and imprisonment.¹⁰

In the Salesian China Province in 1949, the superior was Fr. Carlo Braga who had been at the helm of the province for the past twenty years.¹¹ He was often "in giro", visiting the presences in his tested province, even for a considerable length of time, so that documents took time to be gathered.¹² By 1952, Salesian houses began to closed in Peking, Shanghai, Kun Ming.¹³ This forfeiture of the Salesian work included that of the diocese of Shiu Chow. At the same time, the Salesian presences in Hong Kong and Macao were threatened in case that the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communists spilled over these Islands.

⁸ Cf M. G. ALINEA SJ, *Philippine Role in the Far East*, in «Worldmission» 13 (1962) 2.

⁹ F. BURKHARDT SJ., *Kirche und Chinesen auf den Philippinen*, in «Die Katholischen Missionen» 78 (1959) 108-111; *ibid.*, 72 (1953) 49.

¹⁰ Cf Hubert JEDIN (ed.), *Storia della Chiesa*, XI/2. Milano 1980, pp. 720-723. Cf also *ibid.*, XXIV. Milano 1988, pp. 328-346.

¹¹ Archivio Salesian Centrale (= ASC) F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Acquistapace a V. Ricaldone, Shanghai, 5 ottobre 1946) 2. Fr. Acquistapace wrote of Fr. Braga: "Certo non sarà facile trovare un altro d. Braga dallo spirito salesiano al cento per cento, dal cuore grande di amore per la Cina e ricco di esperienza, dalle vedute larghe, dal coraggio intrepido quando si tratta di una opera della gloria di Dio, e dalle conoscenze ed aderenze in tutti gli strati sociali cinesi ed europei soprattutto delle altre famiglie religiose".

¹² ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Benato a Puddu, Macao, 9 giugno 1946).

¹³ Cf *Elenco Generale della Società di San Francesco di Sales*, 1952-1955.

The Salesians who faced the Communists tried their best to cope up with the situation. At the end, they had to go. They were harassed and dejected. The China Province tried to adapt to the new situation. The presence in Hong Kong was reinforced. Confreres were shuffled. Others were allowed to go for vacation. And when they came back, some of them were deviated to the Philippines, considered as their “sfogo” and “rifugio provvidenziale”.

3. Negotiations

3.1. Turin's initiative

The Salesians came to the Philippines after a series of negotiations between the Philippines and Italy via China. Manila went to Turin to make two concrete offers to the Rector Major so that the Salesians could come to the Philippines. Turin, in turn, asked Hong Kong-Macao to see the feasibility of the offers and to negotiate with Manila.

On account of these seemingly serious and concrete proposals, Fr. Pietro Ricaldone (1870-1951), Superior General, wrote to Fr. Braga, Provincial of the China Province, in 18 November 1949. He asked him to go to Manila and to see for himself the two offers extended to the Salesians.¹⁴ Fr. Modesto Bellido (1902-1993), in-charge of the Salesian missions, who earlier had visited Manila and had met the Apostolic Nuncio of Manila, had, in fact, suggested to Fr. Ricaldone to send someone to survey the possibilities for the Salesians to come to the Philippines. He sincerely believed that a foundation in the Philippines was now “possibile e molto conveniente”.¹⁵

The order of Fr. Ricaldone to Fr. Braga to go to Manila, though, was accompanied by a certain reminder which also served as timely advice: that Fr. Braga should not make any commitment with anyone, and that he should bring the plans of the Salesian School of Aberdeen and present this to the persons who had offered to build a technical school for the Salesians to administer in their sugar refinery in Victorias, Negros Occidental. This initiative of an “Escuela de Artes y Oficios” had been en-

¹⁴ Salesian Archives Hong Kong (= SAHK) Filippine (Ricaldone a Braga, Torino, 18 novembre 1949).

¹⁵ ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Bellido a Ricaldone, Hong Kong, 3 dicembre 1949).

dorsed by the Bishop of Bacolod, who had written to Turin.¹⁶ Moreover, the coming of the Salesians was strongly recommended by no other than the Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines.¹⁷

Fr. Braga quickly moved after receiving Fr. Ricaldone's order. He wrote the Provincial Secretary, Fr. Clemente Benato (1892-1959), to send him the names and addresses of the bishops who called for the Salesians, so that he could inform them of his coming.¹⁸ Moreover, he also wrote Archbishop Piani, currently Apostolic Delegate in Mexico, who did not fail to give him the advise that was asked from him: that the Salesians should first establish themselves in the capital of the Philippines for a practical purpose (the Salesians, instead, would start in a province north of Manila); that they should show special concern for the Salesian Oratory which ought to be the heart of their apostolate (the Oratory would become a tradition mainly in the house of Mandaluyong); that they should not be tied up to boards of trustees nor committees nor to bishops, so that they may be free to go about their work; finally, that Fr. Braga should not be afraid "to mention his name" when he negotiated with the bishops.¹⁹

3.2. Braga's visits

On 26 February 1950, Fr. Braga left Hong Kong and arrived in Manila the next day. This he did, after he had written to Fr. Bellido earlier, informing him that he had plans to make a "scappata" to Italy immediately after his Manila visit in order to inform the superiors of Turin regarding the agreements from his Manila visit.²⁰ This was Fr. Braga. He had not yet gone to Manila, and he had already made arrangements to go to Turin. He did not know yet the terms of the negotiations, and he had already agreements "raggiunti" to discuss with the Superiors.

On 7 June 1950, Fr. Braga reported his first Philippine visit directly to the General Council in Turin. He did not only see the two requests received by Turin: that of a trade school in Negros Occidental, and that of a center for street children and orphans in Cebu. He also entertained other offers to the Salesians: an academy school in Tarlac; two schools in the

¹⁶ SAHK Filippine (Ricaldone a Lladoc, Torino, 18 novembre 1949).

¹⁷ *Ibid.* (Ricaldone a Vagnozzi, Torino, 18 novembre 1949).

¹⁸ *Ibid.* (Braga a Benato, Macao, 9 gennaio 1950).

¹⁹ *Ibid.* (Piani a Braga, Mexico, 19 febbraio 1950).

²⁰ SAHK Filippine (Braga a Bellido, Hong Kong, 6 febbraio 1950).

Island of Iloilo; a school and a minor seminary in Batangas; an unspecified offer in Manila. In summary: eight offers (five schools, a boys' center, a minor seminary, plus an unnamed one), in six provinces (Tarlac, Manila, Negros Occidental, Cebu, Batangas, Iloilo), in four islands (Luzon, Cebu, Negros and Panay), endorsed by six bishops (Gabriel Reyes of Manila, Julio Rosales of Cebu, Cesar Guerrero of San Fernando, Rufino Santos of Lipa, Casimiro Lladoc of Bacolod, Jose Cuenco of Iloilo).²¹

Of these offers, those who followed up their requests for foundations were Tarlac, Cebu and Lipa. The negotiation for Victorias was stalled in as much as the main negotiator was still in the U.S.A.²² There were no contracts elaborated and final agreements made between Fr. Braga and those who offered foundations. But it seemed that Fr. Braga had promised to Archbishop Vagnozzi that the Salesians would already come to take over the school in Tarlac for that coming school year 1950.²³ However, the Salesians did not come, to the embarrassment and delusion of the Apostolic Delegate and the priest who offered the school.

Fr. Braga, after having informed the Apostolic Delegate of his coming,²⁴ was back in Manila for a second visit on 20 February 1951. Fr. Ziggotti, then Prefect General, had written him on 11 January 1951, telling him to visit the Philippines once more to do a quick "sopralluogo" of the requests, "to force those cooperators and admirers of the Salesians" really make concrete offers and give the Salesians a free hand in what they offered, to concentrate his efforts on "una buona proposta" and not on projects difficult to realize, and "far fuoco con la poca legna che abbiamo in Manila".²⁵ But again, he gave another warning to Fr. Braga: there was a restricted number of Salesians available to send to the Philippines. Thus, Fr. Braga should not pretend to accept a number of offers.

Indeed, Fr. Braga directed his attention to the request extended from Victorias as the most possible of the offers. But he had also asked Archbishop Vagnozzi to present him other offers to make the most of his visit in the Philippines.²⁶ For this, he was yet offered another school in the north of the Philippines, in the Mountain Province. But one offer that the Archbishop insisted that the Salesians should immediately take over was

²¹ ASC F 164 Filippine (Braga al Concilio Superiore, maggio 1950).

²² SAHK Filippine (Braga, Pro Memoria [1950]).

²³ *Ibid.* (Vagnozzi a Braga, Manila, 30 settembre 1950).

²⁴ *Ibid.* (Benato a Vagnozzi, Hong Kong, 12 febbraio 1951).

²⁵ ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Ziggotti a Braga, Torino, 11 gennaio 1951).

²⁶ SAHK Filippine (Benato a Vagnozzi, Hong Kong, 12 febbraio 1951).

the school in Tarlac. For he was not pleased that the Salesians had not kept their promise to send personnel soon.²⁷

3.3. *Braga's recommendations*

Fr. Braga's account of his two visits to Turin came in word and in writing. In the form of recommendations, he noted the following to the Superiors in Turin. The Salesians should accept the offer of a school in Victorias, because it was most in need of Salesians, and because the conditions offered by the donors were good.²⁸ Nonetheless, he suggested that the Salesians start first in Tarlac where they were already awaited since the opening of the school year. The offer of Cebu was decisive, since those who requested the Salesians had already started to construct for the Salesians. Later, the offer of Lipa ought to be reckoned with.²⁹

Furthermore, Fr. Braga suggested Turin several other things. The works to be accepted by the Salesians should be scattered as much as possible in the different provinces of the Archipelago. Then, they should insist to having a parish, so that they could have a source of income. But also, the Salesians should found a "rest house", where they could go in the course of their future apostolate in the Philippines.³⁰

At first, Fr. Braga told Fr. Ziggotti that the Salesians should insist on those who requested their coming that they be helped financially in the beginning.³¹ He, however, immediately changed his mind on this regard. The Salesians should not show themselves preoccupied with money, for two reasons. The religious in the Philippines were known to be moneyed because of their exclusive schools. Besides, the Filipino Catholics, according to him, were generous "quando vedono che si lavora seriamente per le anime".³²

Fr. Braga recommended to the Rector Major to immediately send personnel: one for Victorias, in order to supervise the construction of the

²⁷ *Ibid.* (Vagnozzi a Braga, Manila, 24 aprile 1951).

²⁸ ASC F 158 Cina (Braga: Relazione Annuale [marzo-aprile 1951]).

²⁹ *Ibid.*, Cina: Corrispondenza (Braga a Ziggotti, Hong Kong, 12 aprile 1951). He would later recommend to Fr. Bellido to accept the offer of the bishop of Lipa. Cf SAHK Corrispondenza (Braga a Bellido, Hong Kong, 30 luglio 1951).

³⁰ ASC F158 Cina (Braga: Relazione Annuale [marzo-aprile 1951]).

³¹ *Ibid.* (Braga a Ziggotti, Hong Kong, 12 aprile 1951).

³² SAHK Corrispondenza (Braga a Giraudi, Hong Kong, 17 novembre 1951).

school intended by the owners; another for the school in Tarlac, before the opening of the school year of June 1951. But who, according to him, ought to be sent to the Philippines? Preferably, European Salesians who had been moved out from China, should be asked to go; not the Chinese, since the Communists were active in the Philippines, where there was also a growing sense of nationalism.³³ Moreover, the Superiors should send confreres belonging to other Salesian provinces.³⁴

Fr. Braga, though, insisted on one particular thing regarding the personnel to be sent to the Philippines. Turin should send English-speaking confreres as “*conditio sine qua non*”, even if they, too, would have to learn the languages of the country. Why? Because the Salesians in the Philippines were to educate and were to run schools. And the schools of the religious were known for their facility with the English language. Now, Fr. Braga remarked: “*non possiamo presentarci come dei minorati per l'impossibilità di avere l'inglese in bocca*”.³⁵ The Superiors had to look for these English-speaking confreres, Fr. Braga admitted, since there were not so many in the China Province who met this requirement.

Fr. Braga did not have to wait long for Turin's answer. It came promptly after a meeting of the General Council of 30 May 1951. Tarlac was approved, and they were happy about this; in fact, Fr. Braga could sign the contract. Cebu was also approved; Fr. Braga should negotiate for the formulation of a contract and should think of the confreres to send. And Victorias? Fr. Braga had already thought of sending the Salesian Guido D'Amore. However, Turin did not promise to find and send confreres who spoke English, for it foresaw that it would be difficult to encounter confreres of this capacity.³⁶ Finally, it had chosen the Salesian who would be delegate of the provincial for the Philippines, Fr. Luigi Ferrari.³⁷

4. First foundations regularly established

The Salesians could not but begin with the offers that they received, as recommended and approved by the Superiors who were in Turin. Fr. Braga was only too quick to take the opportunities and to turn them to the advantage of the Salesians.

³³ *Ibid.* (Braga a Bellido, Hong Kong, 30 luglio 1951).

³⁴ ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Braga Ziggotti, Hong Kong, 12 aprile 1951).

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ ASC F 158 Cina: corrispondenza (Ziggotti as Braga, Torino, 30 maggio 1951).

³⁷ SAHK Corrispondenza (Braga a Kreutzer, Hong Kong, 28 maggio 1951).

There was already the school in Tarlac, which had asked specifically for them. This was indeed for boys, in a province still in its development. Victorias was not something to be disregarded, since the conditions were so favourable to the Salesians. Besides, those who initiated the offer, lay people though they might have been, were truly imbued by a deep and authentic sense of faith. Cebu, instead, was the nearest to the desire of Don Bosco. Besides, it fitted well to balance the first two foundations.

4.1. Don Bosco Tarlac: "School made by America"

In spite of the recommendation of Archbishop Piani to Fr. Braga, the Salesians did not start in Manila after all. Instead, they began in the province of Tarlac, about three hours from Manila, with a school "made by America".

St. John Bosco Academy in the province of Tarlac was founded by Fr. James Wilson,³⁸ an American army chaplain who came to the Philippines in 1945. He had asked his Ordinary, Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York, for some years of leave so that he could start in the Tarlac town a boys' school. The Holy Spirit Sisters had suggested him this initiative, since they did not have a school where to send their elementary male graduates. With the permission of Archbishop Michael O'Doherty, American Archbishop of Manila, he rented a hotel building on 20 June 1947 and there began a high school.³⁹ He had asked Fr. William Mahoney,⁴⁰ another former American army chaplain, to help him; the latter took over the spiritual direction of the school, the religion classes and the sports activities.

Fr. Wilson, however, sought for a more permanent home for St. John Bosco Academy. Archbishop O'Doherty had, in fact, already approved his request for the construction of a building in the new site that he had

³⁸ Fr. James Wilson was born in New York, U.S.A., on 4 March 1916. He was ordained a priest in 1942 at the age of 26. In 1945, he joined the U.S. army chaplain. In August of the same year, he came to the Philippines. In 1946, he came to Tarlac where he saw the need of a Catholic school for boys. Cf Salesian Archives Philippine-Tarlac (= SAFIN Tarlac), The Silver Bosconian (Souvenir Book, 4 February 1973), 6.

³⁹ Classes started in 6 July 1947 with 86 enrollees: 45 in 1st year, 22 in 2nd year, 15 in 3rd year and 4 in 4th year. Cf SAFIN Tarlac (Ad Lumen, Don Bosco Academy Yearbook, 1952) 2.

⁴⁰ Fr. William Mahoney was described as "the gentle giant" because of his height. He left the school on 22 July to become parish priest of the town of Ramos, in the same province of Tarlac.

recently acquired.⁴¹ By October 1948, Fr. Wilson had transferred his school to its final location, even if he had to continue the construction of the school buildings through the help of his American and Filipino benefactors. But Fr. Wilson was not destined to stay there for long. By July 1951, it had been announced that the Salesians were coming to take over the school.⁴²

Cardinal Spellman had recalled Fr. Wilson back to New York. But the latter did not plan to leave the school which he had established unattended. Besides, he had still a mortgage to pay for the purchase of the land where the school stood. He wanted to give the school to a religious teaching society, which was also capable of meeting the financial obligations and improvements much needed by a growing educational institute. He had consulted Bishop Cesar Guerrero and had asked him to help persuade the Salesians to come to his aid. The fact was that he had hoped that St. John Bosco would work this miracle for him.⁴³

Fr. Wilson had also recruited the help of Fr. Charles McManus, a classmate of him based in New York. The latter had already written on 31 January 1950 to Fr. Ernesto Giovannini (1904-1993), superior of the Salesian U.S.A. East Province, asking him, if he was ready to assume a school "which bears their founder's name".⁴⁴ Fr. Giovannini took interest of the offer and, in fact, asked for further information, so that he could present the proposal to the superiors in Turin for their information and possible decision.⁴⁵ Fr. Wilson did not waste time in answering this request.⁴⁶ His letter to the Salesian provincial was forwarded by the provincial secretary to Fr. Giovannini who, meanwhile, had left for Turin.⁴⁷ With this, the "fate" of St. John Bosco Academy fell in the hands of another American who was now in Turin and who could in fact directly

⁴¹ SAFIN Tarlac: Correspondence (O'Doherty to Wilson, Manila, 27 January 1948). Fr. Wilson had bought a 17,784 sq.m. terrain in barrio Santo Cristo of the same town for the price of Php29,568 from a certain Servillano Aquino. Payment was shared by Archbishop O'Doherty, Fr. Wilson and Bishop Cesar Guerrero of San Fernando. SAFIN Tarlac Correspondence (Wilson to Guanlao, Tarlac, 19 November 1949).

⁴² SAFIN Tarlac School Annual (1951).

⁴³ SAFIN Tarlac Correspondence (Wilson to Guanlao, Tarlac, 19 November 1949): "To hope for a miracle from Don Bosco is not too far fetched. He has already done marvels here. In any case we can at least expect him to help us to help ourselves".

⁴⁴ SAFIN Tarlac: Correspondence (McManus to Giovannini, New York, 31 January 1950).
⁴⁵ *Ibid.* (Giovannini to McManus, New York, 2 February 1950).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (Wilson to Giovannini, Tarlac, 14 February 1950).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* (Kelley to Wilson, New Rochelle, 23 February 1950).

negotiate for its favour. No one noticed, though, that at the same time, Fr. Braga was already in Manila, surveying the possibility of the Salesians working in the Philippines!

By 4 May 1951, Fr. Wilson had furnished a contract for the cession of the school to the Salesians,⁴⁸ as requested by Fr. Braga,⁴⁹ who in turn had endorsed the document to Turin.⁵⁰ Fr. Wilson had expressed his optimism to his superior in New York that St. John Bosco Academy would now become financially viable and self-supporting, with the Salesians taking over.⁵¹ On 16 July 1951, Fr. Braga informed him that Fr. Anthony di Falco (1914-2003), Salesian of the U.S.A. West Province, was coming soon.⁵² St. John Bosco did not fail Fr. Wilson with the miracle that he had asked the Saint!

4.2. *Don Bosco Victorias: A layman's vision of social justice*

The school in Victorias was an offer of a father and his son who were both God-fearing, and who wanted to apply the social teachings of the Church contained in the papal encyclicals in their own life as industrialists.⁵³

Don Miguel Ossorio and his son Frederic owned a sugar milling company which was organized according to the American style: "a big park, English meadows, gracious cemented villas which served as offices, as residence for the managers...."⁵⁴ Their offer of a high school for boys

⁴⁸ ASC F 570 Filippine-Tarlac: Corrispondenza (Wilson to Braga, Tarlac, 4 May 1951).

⁴⁹ SAFIN Tarlac: Correspondence (Braga to Wilson, Hong Kong, 4 February 1951).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* (Braga to Wilson, Hong Kong, 19 May 1951).

⁵¹ *Ibid.* (Wilson to Spellman, Tarlac, 26 May 1951).

⁵² *Ibid.* (Braga to Wilson, Hong Kong, 16 July 1951).

⁵³ To note the chapel of the Sugar Mill that was constructed by the owners: its design reflected the concern and sensitivity of the owners to the Church's teachings regarding the social question. Cf ASC F 622 Filippine: Bacolod-Victorias: Correspondence (Monchiero to Ziggotti, Victorias, 7 March 1952) v.

⁵⁴ ASC F 622 Filippine-Bacolod: Corrispondenza (Monchiero a Ziggotti, Victorias, 7 marzo 1952): "In fact, the technical personnel of the Company was international. They lived in two-story houses, with their servants, garden, refrigerators, telephone, etc. ... modern and well-equipped. Food, travels, laundry were reimbursed by the Company. The monthly pay ranged from Php250 to Php100.... After six years of work, the Company paid the expenses of a six-month vacation, which could be in any part of the world. The houses of the workers were in cement. They had free water and light. The life provisions (food provisions/supplies) were at a reduced price in determined shops. There were 400 kilometers of railways, and 25 locomotives for transportation." Cf *ibid.*

was a mere part of their vision of an educational program. Their desire was to create a “family view”, which should guide the life within the community and those responsible for the sugar central. Workers and management ought to form a whole community unto themselves, in which “the real union was not a labour union, but a Christian and community union”.⁵⁵

Fr. Braga, who must have thought that he had understood the mind of the Ossorios, dared to declare that he planned to make the island where the future Salesian work would be located as “the capital of Catholic Action” of the Philippines. With this in mind, the plans that he had accorded with the Ossorios began to mushroom, at the expense of Victorias Milling Company (Vicmico), the sugar mill owned by his benefactors. He now asked for more buildings: a theatre able to seat 1,000; another building which can contain 500 boys; another to board 150 boys.⁵⁶

The impression of the Ossorios, however, was that the Salesians were lost in a fever of school ambition! They were focused on “the boys” and the community life of the school. Instead, Frederick Ossorio, saw the whole Church to work for, not merely a sector of it. And his main reference was to love God and seek His will. This last, he seemed never to have heard from the Salesians.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, good men as the Ossorios’ were, they continued to put their trust on the Salesians.

Don Bosco Victorias was also a school in which the Ossorios, not Fr. Braga, insisted that there be a written contract. Even before, they had encouraged the Salesians come up with a statement of intention and moral commitment. Earlier, Turin had insisted that there should be contract between the Salesians and those who asked the Salesians to establish a particular work before the Salesians accepted the offer. In the case of Victorias, the Ossorios had now insisted on a written contract, if only to clarify the question of the financing of the school.⁵⁸ The truth, was that, the Salesians were beginning to ask too much.

This was the clear offer by Miguel Ossorio, who had earlier sent his manager, Don Claudio Luzuriaga, who personally went to Hong Kong to see the Salesian School of Aberdeen, “to visit technical centers in Asia in search of special technicians to help establish a technical school to de-

⁵⁵ SAFIN Victorias: Correspondence (Frederic O. to Braga, Victorias, 5 December 1950).

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* (Miguel O. to Frederic O., Greenwich, Connecticut, 30 July 1951).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* (Frederic O. to Miguel O., Victorias, 7 August 1951) 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* (Frederic O. to Miguel O., Victorias, 7 August 1951) 2; *ibid.*, (Miguel O. to Frederic O., Greenwich, Connecticut, 30 July 1951).

velop idle boys in the plantation into valuable workers in the future”:⁵⁹ he was willing to contribute for the expenses of a Trade School according to what may be needed for the community of Vicmico.⁶⁰ His Company was obliged to provide the Salesians the following: (a) monthly salary of Php100 per Salesian; (b) board and lodging and domestic helpers gratis; (c) construction of buildings needed for a Vocational Trade School which should be ready by May or early June 1952.⁶¹

On the other hand, the Salesians would operate a vocational trade school inside the premises of Vicmico, so as to teach the trades of mechanics including metal work, machine shop and foundry, electricity and carpentry, as well as the minor trades of shoe-making and tailoring. Its students would be primarily the sons of the employees of Vicmico. The school’s size would be according to the buildings provided by the Company; its teaching staff would be members of the Salesian Society.⁶²

Obviously, this was an offer that the Salesians could not resist. It was all to their advantage. A school was going to be constructed for them; and then they were going to be financially sustained by their benefactor. Thus began the Salesian School of Victorias, “the real first technical school”.⁶³ Frederic Ossorio would state: “This is a work not only for the Company but also for God, and it has a life not only in conjunction with the Company but on its own”.⁶⁴ It was personally visited by the President of the Philippines, who remarked that this was the kind of schools that the Philippines needed.⁶⁵ Don Bosco Victorias, indeed, was a school that outlasted the Company.⁶⁶

In the mind of Fr. Braga, the Salesian house of Victorias was the work which opened the doors to the Salesians and which had facilitated all the rest. It helped financially; it had a name of its own. For this, it had to be taken care of more.⁶⁷ One of Vicmico’s managers dared to remark: “The Don Bosco Technical Institute being one of the best if not the best equipped trade school in the Far East, is, and will be playing a very important role in training and building up skilled labor so important for the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* (A brief history of Don Bosco Victorias) 1.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* (Miguel O. to Frederic O., Greenwich, Connecticut, 30 July 1951).

⁶¹ *Ibid.* (Frederic O. to Braga, Greenwich, Connecticut, 26 September 1951).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.* (Questionario per le scuole professionali, 1953-1954).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* (Frederic O. to Miguel O., Victorias, 7 August 1951).

⁶⁵ Bollettino Salesiano 85 (aprile 1961) 131.

⁶⁶ SAFIN Victorias: Correspondence (Frederic O. to Miguel O., Victorias, 7 August 1951).

⁶⁷ ASC F 163 Filippine: Corrispondenza (Braga a Ziggotti, Tarlac, 9 febbraio 1960).

industrialization of the country".⁶⁸ For at a certain point, Vicmico became known because of Don Bosco Technical Institute. Nay, Don Bosco Technical Institute became even more famous than Vicmico.

4.3. *A different work: Cebu Boys Town*

Although it finally began only in 1954, the work in Cebu had been offered to the Salesians since 1949. It was already approved, in fact, by Turin in 1951 together with works of Tarlac, Lipa, Mandaluyong and Victorias. It was an offer that was unique: it directed the Salesians into the real recipients of their founder's charisma.

The Salesian Boys Town was first an initiative of Don Ramon and Doña Maria Aboitiz of Cebu. Together with these God-fearing couple, it was the project of civic-minded and socially oriented but also religious-motivated ladies, who were mostly members of the Church organization Catholic Womens' League. The Catholic Archbishop of Cebu City, Julio Rosales, endorsed this particular initiative by the Cebuanos to Turin. For the Salesians, however, it was not to start a school but to take over a center for street children and orphans, who were actually creating an ugly social situation for the Philippines' second most important city.

The first Cebu Boys Town was a Php12,000 building, built in the compound of Cebu Cathedral. Its roofing and sidings were perched on the posts of the Church located along Legazpi Street. It was constructed with the proceeds from a Carnival in 1947 and from the donations of concerned citizens. The place, for the moment, was good enough to accommodate 30 boys and the Salesians: there was place to sleep, a public basketball court nearby for sports, and the Church itself just beside for mass. The boys ate on army trays and spent their time at the Town by cleaning the yards, scrubbing the floors and washing the dishes. It even had an extra table reserved for drop-ins but who came only for meals.⁶⁹

But this was home for the children of the streets of Cebu City: "homeless waifs that fought, cursed, stole and starved along the city's waterfront and thoroughfares". So that when Fr. Attilio Boscarol (1915-1976) and the cleric Agustin Lopez came to Boys Town to begin their work on

⁶⁸ SAFIN Victorias: Correspondence (Paul Pfiffner, Report on Don Bosco Technical College, Victorias, 12 July 1957).

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* Cebu: The Republican Daily (23 February 1955).

15 March 1954, they received the first four boys from the Asilo de la Medalla Milagrosa,⁷⁰ as those whom they would take in later as they were picked up from the pier or were passed on to them by Cebu's concerned citizens.⁷¹

This particular work was supposed to be of and by the Cebuanos' charity. Like the Boys Town in America (Fr. Wegner, director of Boys' Town U.S.A. and who was in Cebu for a visit, was consulted by Fr. Ferrari regarding this new Salesian work), to sustain Boys Town, help was supposed to come from the thousands of the average people of Cebu who with their 20 centavos, 50 centavos, one or two pesos because of their kind hearts would give the boys of the Boys Town the chance to grow up into useful and better citizens of Cebu.⁷² Not for less that this work was known as Cebu Boys Town. Fr. Boscariol, speaking of this work as a "unique family", declared to those who were celebrating the National Family Week in the first week of December 1954: "The Salesian Fathers are making an appeal for more cooperation for the improvement and growing up of this family, who belongs, not to the Fathers, but to you all – Cebuanos, because this too is your very own family".⁷³

Thus donations for the work came from the base as well as from the upper level: a radio from a certain Mr. Ros, "galletas" from the University of Visayas, a refrigerator from a certain Don Mariano, 12 beds from Mrs. Herrera, bicycles, wheel borrows, barber's kit, sack of sugar and sack of corn from Mrs. Sidebottom.⁷⁴ The City Mayor launched "Operation One Centavo" by installing boxes in the offices so that employees could give their share.⁷⁵ The Cebu Bakeries' Association promised 75 pieces of bread daily.⁷⁶ The Board of Trustees, the committee in charge to generate funds in order to maintain Boys Town, launched a membership campaign to obtain benefactors. The Undersecretary for Commerce and Industry spoke to Cebu Rotary Club in a luncheon meeting in favour of

⁷⁰ The "Asilo de la Milagrosa" was founded in 1934 by concerned alumnae of Colegio de la Immaculada Concepcion. In 1936, the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul took over the management of the Institution. Later, they would pass to the Salesians some of the boys of the Asilo.

⁷¹ SAFIN Cebu: Southern Star (3 May 1955).

⁷² SAFIN Cebu: [unnamed] Newspaper article (18 March 1954).

⁷³ *Ibid.*: Discourse of Fr. [Attilio] Guerrino Boscariol (Cebu City, December 1954) 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*: [unnamed] Newspaper article (18 March 1954).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*: House Chronicle (25 June 1954).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*: Correspondence (Aboitiz to Tan, Cebu, 11 June 1954).

the Town.⁷⁷ It was a fine example of lay collaboration on behalf of an initiative of the lay. However, contributions did not always come regularly and sufficiently.

The boys, who frequented Boys Town, were “fondly” called by Cebu’s newspapers as “inmates”. They frequented Abellana Vocational High School for their free education.⁷⁸ For the sacraments, especially that of confession, they went to the Church of Santo Niño. For their recreation, they would swim at Talisay, Marigondon, Mactan, or hike to Guadalupe, Oton or Toledo. They would even go to see movies, for free, at Liberty Cinema.

The first residents who lived at the Town were really poor and abandoned, the kind of boys that St. John Bosco would have wanted to surely help: Antonio Dangel was a 13-year old who lived near the railroad crossing and whose father was a cargador (one who loaded or unloaded cargo from boats docked in Cebu’s pier); Felipe Villamor was a 15-year old orphan and was homeless; Alberto Labares was also 15 years old who worked as a cargador and whose mother was a laundrywoman; Vicente Funtebella was 11 years old whose brother and guardian was a cargador. These boys were apprehended by the police “for roaming the City without work”; they were turned over to Fr. Boscariol and to the Town.⁷⁹ Some of these boys did not stay for long because of their “nostalgia del Pier”.⁸⁰

Cebu Boys Town continued to be for street children when it transferred to its permanent home at Punta Princesa near the Antuwanga hills on 5 March 1955. Here, it now had a building complex, which could contain 200 boys who would follow a curriculum of home-keeping and handicraft work, farming and other productive vocational subjects. There had been in fact some “metamorphosis” on the boys: “once wayward, astray waifs who from ruggedness and insecurity are now very courteous, playful and possessing healthy appetites”.⁸¹ Even the Rector Major, Fr. Renato Ziggotti witnessed this personally as he visited the work on 6 April 1955; he even wrote the confreres from Manila to thank and to encourage them for what Fr. Boscariol and the other Salesians were doing.⁸²

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*: House Chronicle (25 June 1954).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* (29 June 1954).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*: Correspondence (Trinidad to Boscariol, Cebu City, 19 March 1954).

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: House Chronicle (28 April 1955).

⁸¹ *Ibid.* (2 April 1955).

⁸² *Ibid.* (14 April 1955).

However, in less than six years time, Boys Town had become a technical school with an elementary and a high school, so that the boys did not need to go out anymore, as Fr. Braga informed Fr. Ziggotti.⁸³ Slowly, though, that which had been closest to the “*da mihi animas*” of Don Bosco was ending up into the typical “*collegio*” and “*internato*”. The normal boys slowly took the place of the really needy and abandoned. Cebu Boys Town, which started and which was supposed to be sustained by the Cebuanos, now became a school of and by the Salesians. It now also included a boarding house, where boys who frequented the normal school mixed with the boys of the street. And in spite of the already taxing work in Boys Town, the Salesians still adopted a parish which demanded so much from them who had to extend themselves in order to meet the demands of a school, a center for street children, a boarding house, and a parish.⁸⁴ In August 1955, a new superior, who had replaced Fr. Boscariol, would give a new sense to Cebu Boys Town.⁸⁵

5. Foundations “*fait’accompli*”

It was not always according to a specific plan that the beginnings of the Salesians in the Philippines evolved; nor was it always with the immediate placet of the superiors of Turin that foundations begun. The Salesians, especially those who believed they knew better and who perhaps really knew better, entertained other offers presented to them by enthusiastic admirers of the work they did. Turin might have considered this insubordination. The Salesians perhaps thought this as providence and opportunity not to let go. Fr. Acquistapace and Fr. Braga, in fact, were reprimanded by Turin because they went ahead without even consulting Turin; the latter would defend themselves and promptly answer back.

5.1. *Don Bosco Makati: For future development*

On 27 June 1952, Fr. Braga, while still Provincial of China, had met the industrialist Mr. J. R. McMicking with whom he discussed the four-

⁸³ ASC F 163 Filippine: Corrispondenza (Braga a Ziggotti, Tarlac, 9 febbraio 1960) 3.

⁸⁴ F 636 Cebu Punta Princesa N.S. di Lourdes (Decretum canonicae erectionis, 5 Novembris 1976).

⁸⁵ SAFIN Cebu: House Chronicle (29 August 1955).

dation of an industrial school in the area of Makati in Manila. Fr. Braga presented the idea of providing boys of the underprivileged classes who lived in the area with industrial skill, and thus be able to work in the nearby industrial plants. Such undertaking coincided with the industrialist's own, so that he was ready to give to the Salesians a six-hectare land strategically located in the industrial district that he was developing, plus the sum of Php15,000 for the first construction, if the Salesians would eventually agree and accept his plan.⁸⁶

Fr. Braga would not be able to close this offer, since he was ending his term as provincial. Instead, his successor, Fr. Acquistapace, after having written to Fr. Ziggotti of this offer and promised him that he would soon send the plans for approval by Turin, immediately started in December 1953 the construction of a small house for an oratory and for a temporary residence of the Salesians. He believed that this new initiative would be the germ for a grandiose work.⁸⁷ Besides, the Apostolic Nuncio and the Archbishop of Manila were now ready to give the Salesians a parish that they wanted so much, since this would help in augmenting their limited finances.

It was Fr. Fedrigotti, the Prefect General, who responded to Fr. Acquistapace's letter. He asked. Did the constructions start already? Did the donor and the Archbishop give guarantees for the finances of the initiative? Did he have authorization from the Superiors to accept the offer? Did he have personnel? Thus, for the Prefect General, Makati was still "in the air".⁸⁸

Fr. Acquistapace, who probably felt himself still a dilettante as a provincial, had to write the Rector Major to explain the "facenda". Makati was to be treated as a future arrangement of the house of Mandaluyong. It was a work, which was not yet to be in full swing. Instead, he reminded the Superior that the Parish of San Ildefonso⁸⁹ was something that both Turin and Manila long wanted. For it was a sure source of income for the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Makati: Correspondence (McMicking to Braga (Manila, 29 July 1952).

⁸⁷ ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Acquistapace a Ziggotti, Hong Kong, 24 dicembre 1953).

⁸⁸ ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Fedrigotti a Acquistapace, Torino, 14 gennaio 1954): "Se non hai il personale, aspetta ad accettare!".

⁸⁹ This "Parish of Makati" was a small land with a "shed" as a Church. But in this Church, there had been for a long time a statue of Mary Help of Christians who was well venerated." Cf ASC F 157 Cina: Corrispondenza (Acquistapace a Ziggotti, Hong Kong, 18 maggio 1955).

Saleians in the Philippines. Besides, it would be rather strange if they refused it, when other religious yearned so much to have such an offer.⁹⁰

In the end, Fr. Acquistapace got what he wanted. The future vocational school was approved and the house was erected,⁹¹ but again not without controversy. For Fr. Ferrari, the Provincial Delegate, managed to have the work canonically erected by the Manila Archbishop, not by Turin!⁹² This, obviously, did not please Turin, who had to advise Manila to tell the Cardinal in a nice way that the Salesians belonged to a religious society of a pontifical right.⁹³

The Parish of San Ildefonso, which Fr. Ziggiotti would refer as Parish of Culi-Culi in reference to its location known for “la mala vita”, was also accepted (but not without polemics), not only because it was to the financial advantage of the Salesians, but also for the work which the Salesians wanted to do for the young of the district which they considered as “tra le più bisognose moralmente della città”.⁹⁴

5.2. Don Bosco Seminary-College: A Salesian's dare

Fr. Braga, concerned that the Salesians should generate as soon as possible local vocations for the future development of their work, wanted to find a permanent place for the junior seminary. He had already eyed a terrain for sale somewhere in Tagaytay or Silang in the province of Cavite, a place where other religious had put up their retreat houses and centers of spirituality.

However, there had been a turn of events. Don Jose Yulo Sr., another industrialist who also owned a sugar refinery, had offered to Fr. Braga six hectares of land. That was, if the Salesians would agree to his condition that they take over a school within his estate. The school, according to him, had fallen into the influence of the Protestants, of which the principal was one.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* (Acquistapace a Ziggiotti, Hong Kong, 2 febbraio 1954). Cf also *ibid.*, (Acquistapace a Ziggiotti, Hong Kong, 24 dicembre 1953).

⁹¹ F 477 Filippine: Manila-Makati. (Decretum canonicae erectionis, Fedrigotti, Torino, 7 Julii 1956).

⁹² *Ibid.* (Decree of canonical erection, Rufino J. Santos, Manila, 15 September 1955).

⁹³ *Ibid.* (Osservazioni, Torino, 26 ottobre 1955). Cf also *ibid.*, Corrispondenza (Puddu a Benato, Torino, 3 novembre 1955).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*: Makati-San Ildefonso (Conferimento della parrocchia de S. Ildefonso alla Società Salesiana). Cf also *ibid.*, (Ziggiotti, 24 gennaio 1957).

⁹⁵ F 163 Filippine: Corrispondenza (Braga a Fedrigotti, Makati, 9 agosto 1960).

Fr. Braga could not resist the offer, since it was so strategic and convenient. But above all, it was the answer to his prayer for a place for a minor seminary and a novitiate. It was, in fact, already decided to transfer the aspirantate from Negros Island to somewhere in Luzon, preferably near Manila. Indeed, most of the aspirants came from the Salesian schools located in Luzon Island; also, the parents of the boys resented their children being too far from them.

Thus, the Visitatore immediately sent Fr. Buchta, whom he had already destined to the school in Tarlac, to be director of Rizal Institute Canlubang. The latter, who had immediately begun his work, was already loved and esteemed by the teachers of the school. The Secretary of Education had even praised him in public, for having improved the school without offending anyone.⁹⁶

But there was a greater need of the Salesian Vice-Province, which was now on the way to being erected a Province. The Filipino clerics were still sent to Hong Kong for their study of Philosophy. When they came back to the Philippines, however, they remained disqualified to teach in the Salesian schools, in as much as they did not have any degree. This already preoccupied Fr. Braga who was not at ease at the accommodations given to the Salesian clerics. The local government education officials were, in fact, just closing their eyes to the clerics' lack of qualification and allowing them to teach.⁹⁷ This also bothered Fr. Alfred Cogliandro (1911-1992), who had been appointed as Superior of the new Province. The truth was that in the Philippines, the externs and the lay teachers and personnel were practically the ones running the schools. The clerics were inferior to them, as they did not even have a college degree.⁹⁸

Above all, this situation challenged the novice master, Fr. Jose Luis Carreño (1905-1986).⁹⁹ For after more than a year since he arrived (May 1962), he finally decided to appeal to the Rector Major to put an end to sending the newly professed Filipino Salesians to Hong Kong. In his mind, he considered this "exodus" as unjustifiable and abusive. For this, he presented to Fr. Ziggotti all the reasons he could muster (Canon Law,

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.* (Braga a Pianazzi, Makati, 9 settembre 1962).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* (Cogliandro a Fedrigotti, Makati 31 ottobre 1963).

⁹⁹ Fr. Carreño was esteemed as "una persona amabilissimo, di buona stampa salesiana". Cf ASC F 163 Filippine: Corrispondenza (Clifford a Ziggotti, Cebu, 4 gennaio 1962). Fr. Braga was happy that the Superiors were sending him. Cf *Ibid.* (Braga a Ziggotti, Makati, 7 maggio 1962).

Philosophy, Salesian Constitutions, etc.) to justify his position, revealing at the same time not only his intelligence, but above all his wisdom.¹⁰⁰

Fr. Carreño told Fr. Ziggotti that he was not alone in this consideration. Members of the Provincial Council and most of the rectors shared his initiative, even if Fr. Braga, as well as the new provincial, were against it.¹⁰¹ But what he proposed, that they start their own college and their own studentate of Philosophy, was realizable. There was already that "new house" in Canlubang, which could accommodate 50 novices and clerics, plus 12 professors. It was high time that they started the process of obtaining the accreditation of a College with the scholastic authorities. If they did that now, it would mean that after only four years, there could be the first Filipino Salesians really qualified to teach in the Salesian schools. Besides, staying in the Philippines, these clerics could already be actually involved in the re-Christianization of the diocese, as confided to him by the local bishop under whose jurisdiction the Salesian seminary was.¹⁰² In the Philippines, the Filipino clerics should be formed, not elsewhere. For Fr. Carreño, this was wise and logical.

Fr. Carreño had one more thing to ask the Rector Major: to do what Fr. Bellido once did in India. The superior of the missions did not hesitate to send young clerics from Europe to the missions of India. Fr. Ziggotti, according to him, ought to send from Europe about 20 novices to the Philippines, to join the local novices there. This mixture would be of help for both local and foreign young Salesians, as well as for the good of the new province.¹⁰³

As Fr. Carreño wrote the Rector Major, no newly professed that of May 1963, in fact, went to Hong Kong. Instead, they were now together with the new novices in the College of Canlubang, which was already functioning as it awaited approval by the government. Fr. Cogliandro,

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* (Carreño a Ziggotti, Canlubang, 5 settembre 1953).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* (Cogliandro a Fedrigotti, Makati, 3 ottobre 1963): "E' un poeta, e che cosa non è? E' uno scholar in any subject. Ma la sua poesia è una poesia sana, e per quanto ne so io che l'ho conosciuto da vicino, adesso e nel passato, è una poesia che fa del bene alle anime, una poesia salesianamente cristallina, ed una conoscenza di Don Bosco ortodossa. Se la pianta si conosce dai frutti: abbiamo un tronco ottimo, anche se - tra l'altro è rivestito di fiori poetici".

¹⁰² *Ibid.* (Carreño a Ziggotti, Canlubang, 5 settembre 1963).

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*: "Questi giovani imparerebbero il Tagalog e potrebbero prendere la cittadinanza di qui in 5 anni, insieme ai titoli di insegnamento; la miscela coi filippine sarebbe vantaggiosa per ambedue".

who eventually converted to Fr. Carreño's initiative, confirmed to Fr. Fedrigotti the good that was actually happening in Canlubang. Fr. Carreño was doing well as novice master and rector of Don Bosco Seminary-College. They, in fact, expected about 50 clerics between novices and students of Philosophy for that coming August of 1964.¹⁰⁴

Conclusion

The coming of the Salesians could be considered as rather timely, on account of the on-going Communist expulsion of religious from the Chinese Mainland. The Salesians who were being expelled and were thus losing their jobs could now go to the Philippines to give vent to their apostolic energy. The Philippines was to be the "outlet" and refuge for those who were forcibly put out of China. But it became also an alternative venue for those who wanted to get out of the China Province.

Besides, the Philippines asked for the Salesians. Fr. Braga had more than enough requests he could hold on when he first came to Manila in 1950. The ecclesiastical and the civil connived in order to bring his confreres to the Archipelago, to effect precisely the type of Salesian work that the Philippines needed most for the moment, to help its young.

The beginning of the Salesians in the Philippines was definitely "Chinese" in character. This was obviously reflected in the first personnel who came. To put it, Fr. Braga tried later to be Filipino; but his heart had always been Chinese. Or better, his heart had always remained in China, even if he tried to be Filipino too.

The first two Salesian presences were very much American. Fr. Anthony Di Falco and Fr. John Rutkowski were products of the Salesian environs of San Francisco and New York. Even the Ossorios, who were based in the U.S.A., had their industry patterned after what was American. Don Bosco School in Tarlac was also started by an American.

A good bulk of those who worked in the beginning in the Philippines was very Italian in nationality and in mentality. Their common language in the beginning was indeed Italian, which went well with those who were non-Italian. Nonetheless, this did not mean that these Sons of Don Bosco did not revise and adapt their doings to the exigencies of their

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* (Cogliandro a Fedrigotti, San Fernando, 10 luglio 1964).

work place and the recipients of their ministry. One thing they realized perhaps: the Philippines were not the missions they imagined in China.

The Salesians in the Philippines put themselves immediately in the educational apostolate. Although they almost always started with the oratory as a work, they ended up catering to schools. Fr. Braga, from the beginning, never wanted the Salesians to be inferior to the other religious who were involved in the same business of schools. Their school were very good. In fact, they gave prestige to the Salesians, especially in the technical education. But then, this was probably what the Salesians who came to the Philippines were good at.

The Salesians were known for their technical schools. But because of this, the coadjutors definitely had a crucial and important role in this technical education. There is a need to study the contribution of the Salesian coadjutors, as well as the impact of the technical education they shared in Philippine education.