

This Day in History... February 3, 1945

The Battle of Manila

On February 3, 1945, the Allies launched the Battle of Manila during World War II.

Manila is the capital, largest city, and leading port of the Philippines. The Japanese seized this city, located on the island of Luzon, just four weeks after World War II began in the Pacific.

On January 9, 1945, the Allies landed on the island with the largest landing force used in the Pacific campaign, and began fighting their way to Manila. The Japanese were ready with an impressive army of 250,000 men. Despite their size however, the Japanese had been weakened by Filipino guerrilla attacks and steady bombings by US aircraft. US forces defeated the Japanese in the north and east, then prepared for their final drive on Manila, which coincided with the 8th Army's drive across the base of the Bataan Peninsula.

The first US troops reached the outskirts of Manila on February 3, seized a strategically important bridge, and then captured the Malacanang Palace. The next wave of US soldiers targeted the University of Santo Tomas, which had been turned into a 4,255-prisoner internment camp. After exchanging fire, the Japanese negotiated to release the prisoners if they were allowed to join their own troops at the Malacanang Palace (which they did not know had been taken).

Though General MacArthur announced the fall of Manila on February 6, the fighting continued for nearly a month. Little by little, US troops captured bridges, buildings, and other locations. Despite American attempts to protect the city's people and historic buildings, the Japanese took their frustrations out on both. This nearly destroyed Intramuros (the city's oldest section) and led to the deaths of 100,000 civilians. Defeated Japanese commanders committed ritual suicide on February 26.

This stamp was issued on MacArthur's 91st birthday in 1971.

It took 29 days to clear the city, and in the desperate house-to-house struggle much of Manila was destroyed. On March 3rd, the city was liberated. US troops freed more than 5,000 Allied prisoners. Although small bands of Japanese remained and continued to fight, MacArthur was able to establish a base from which to invade Japan itself. The month-long Battle of Manila was the first and most violent urban fighting of the war in the Pacific. The Filipinos began rebuilding Manila almost immediately. Today Manila is again the country's chief cultural, social, and commercial city.



Stamp from the World War II – 1945: Victory at Last Sheet



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