

# FEAR OF JAPANESE FELT BY FILIPINOS

## They Ponder What Would Happen to Them in Event of War in the Pacific

### QUEZON COMMENTS COOLLY

By H. FORD WILKINS

MANILA—The Filipinos are nervous over recent events in Asia. The duration of the Commonwealth is at the half-way mark, only five more years remaining before complete independence in 1946. And at this stage many Filipinos fear they may lose the comparative ease and security they have been enjoying for forty years under American tutelage and protection.

Broadly they fear that war will touch these peaceful shores. Specifically they are apprehensive of Japan's designs upon their country. Her assumption of guardianship over Greater East Asia has given new meaning to apprehensions which had largely lain dormant, like something too far in the future to do anything but let some one else worry about.

Five years ago—even six months ago—few took seriously the idea that the United States and Japan might actually become involved in war in which the position of the Philippines would be decidedly exposed. But now increased numbers are giving way to the fear of sea blockade, of bombings of unprotected cities and peaceful towns, of invasion and conquest, relegation of Filipinos to the humblest jobs in government and business, and death to independence aspirations.

### Some Act in Fright

In many sections of the provinces there is near panic. Those with a little knowledge of what is happening are worse off than those who cannot read the newspapers. They are withdrawing their money from banks, taking their children out of schools, gathering their relatives and possessions with brood instinct to wait and tremble for the worst. Scarcely a day passes that does not include a call to Manila from some provincial center asking if it is true that Japan has declared war upon America, or vice versa.

Suspicion and fear of the Japanese are based partly on the presence of some 30,000 Japanese in this country whose actions are now being closely watched. The conviction is spreading that every Japanese is a potential spy, regardless of whether he has been a peaceful and law-abiding resident of the Philippines for ten or twenty years.

That the infiltration of more Japanese in recent years has been purposeful and planned seems evident to the Filipinos. The islanders met the situation in part last year with an immigration law, approved by the United States Government, restricting to 500 annually the number of aliens of any one nationality who might enter the Philippines. This figure is a relatively small proportion of the Japanese who have been entering the country during the last five years. The Japanese resented this restriction and made formal protests to Washington.

### Centered in Mindanao

The principal region of Japanese penetration is the large and rich island of Mindanao. The southeast corner of this island, near the Dutch-owned Celebes Islands and British North Borneo, is already Japanese in all but title. Here, in the city and Province of Davao, live and prosper 17,888 Japanese. They control the hemp-growing industry, have their own schools, their own stores, plantations and Japanese-style homes.

Davao is a mature nucleus of Japanese civilization. From here the Japanese are spreading gradually into the central and coastal parts of Mindanao. Japanese chain stores spring up overnight, to the consternation of Chinese tienda owners, whose goods they undersell. They can even more easily undersell American goods, even over protective tariffs. The Japanese use this fact as an argument that their economy and their commercial goods are better suited to the Philippines than the high-standard products of the United States, especially to a country which has accepted the prospect of comparative penury after independence.

Filipino suspicion of the Japanese is founded more upon their overt actions as a nation than upon subversive actions as residents of the Philippines. The invasion of China and the partial occupation of Indo-China created a more profound impression than has any local prowling about with cameras and maps or infringement upon coastal waters by Japanese fishing craft. At the same time increasing note has been taken of such activities in late months, both by United States military authorities and by the Filipinos themselves.

### Near an Airport

In the Province of Albay the Japanese are reported to have leased sizeable tracts of land close to the Associated and Standard Oil installations, one plot being just below the local airport, which, although used commercially, is marked as a landing field for Air Corps use.

In the rich sugar Province of Occidental Negros, central Philippines, there is acute alarm among the Filipinos. The infiltration tactics so successfully used in Davao are becoming more and more prevalent. The Japanese marry Filipino women and acquire lands in the names of their wives, evading constitutional provisions against the ownership of land by aliens. The children of these unions are Japanese in outlook. In one Negros



barrio the Japanese have built a "baseball field" of such generous proportions that the Filipinos are convinced it could serve as an airplane landing field.

The official attitude of the Filipinos is one of unquestioned loyalty to the United States. They have offered in case of trouble all their resources in manpower, all the assistance of their Army, now half way through its development program under General Douglas MacArthur, one of America's most distinguished soldiers. They can place 150,000 or more trained men in the field, ready to fight except for guns and ammunition and equipment, of which they do not at present have enough to go around. Whether with the assistance of the United States Fleet and some 5,000 American officers and soldiers of the Philippine Department, United States Army, they could effect a successful defense of these sprawling islands is a military question.

### Quezon's Reassurance

Officially the Filipinos do not believe this contingency will occur. When one says "officially" in the Philippines concerning matters of national policy, it is to quote President Manuel Quezon. If Mr. Quezon shares the fears of his more unlettered countrymen concerning war and devastation here he exhibits none of it. In order to allay fears he has adopted an attitude of levity.

"Bombs," he said recently, "might do Manila some good. Our streets are too narrow. Destroy

some of our old buildings and we'll have a chance to build a real city, with broad streets and boulevards and great stores. Our people don't need to be afraid of bombs. We can get out. Look at the broad fields where we can go and be saved from bombs. We can have picnics."

The President's attitude served to calm the people—until the papers published news about American women and children being advised to leave Japan and China.

### Economic Effect Feared

What the President really fears from war is the economic effect upon the Philippines. However, it does not seem inconceivable to the Filipinos that they might obtain certain benefits from the situation that confronts them, benefits in the form of further economic and military assistance from the United States. What they would like is an extension of the Commonwealth adjustment program for another ten years. They want suspension by the United States of tariff applications and quota restrictions until after peace is established in the world. They wish an immediate formal conference on these things, presumably in Washington.

In exchange for these hoped-for benefits from the United States they offer a continued tariff-free market for American goods in the United States' seventh best overseas market. But they see no reason for abandoning the plan for political independence in 1946 and would like to go through with that part of the program.