

THE FILIPINO PONDERERS

By ROBERT AURA SMITH

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JUAN DE LA CRUZ, out in the Philippine provinces, celebrated last Friday the completion of the fifth year of his Philippine Commonwealth. There are five more years to go, under the law, and then on the next Fourth of July, that will be in 1946, there will be an independent Philippine Republic.

Juan is worried. He has a right to be worried. That ten-year period was supposed to get his country ready for independence, but now he doesn't know. The Japanese are marching south, and the Philippines are in their line of march. The Philippines were supposed to do something to change their dependence on the free American market, and Juan is wondering what has been done.

They told Juan, back in 1935, that the Philippine Army would make his country "virtually invulnerable," but now the Presidente is beginning to have his doubts. He wants to see more gray ships of the Asiatic Fleet in Manila Bay, and the Presidente wants American anti-aircraft guns.

Juan loves his country, and he should. It is a beautiful archipelago, with its lofty mountains, fertile plains, friendly valleys and blue bays. And Juan wants to be "free," but he is beginning to wonder whether "independencia" is the road to true freedom. If the United States doesn't buy the sugar and the coconut oil, who will? And if the sugar and the coconuts are not sold, what will Juan do about the tax collector?

THERE is always the mining industry, of course. It gave him a wonderful stock boom in 1935 and 1936. His country is shipping a million tons of iron a year to Japan right now. They found oil down on the Bondoc peninsula. And Balatoc continues to be the best ton-for-ton gold mine under the American flag, and the total gold output of the Philippines passed Alaska again last year.

But Juan wants to know about the basic problems. What about the economy of his islands? Is this rich country to be bankrupted? Can he live without the American market? What about national defense? Will the Japanese allow him to live in peace?

He wants his "independence." Has the United States so contrived its legislation that his independence can be purchased only at the price of his freedom?

As he passes the half-way mark, Juan is beginning to wonder. The United States has the answer.

Photos by Ferno Jacobs from Three Lions

THE PEOPLE

There are about 16,000,000 Filipinos, and although they are all Malays they show traces at some points of other Eastern races, particularly the Chinese. They range

from the wild-looking but very intelligent mountain people, some of whom were head-born fighters, but as a whole they are an easy-going people. Down in the southern islands there are about 1,000,000 Moros, and their reputation is not so amiable.



THE PROBLEMS

Philippine economy, now based on raising money crops for export to the United States, must be changed to a diversified and self-sustaining economy based on domestic needs if independence is to succeed. So far not enough progress in that

direction has been made. As matters stand, the only crop in the Philippines wholly consumed by the people is rice, grown by several million peasant farmers. Much rice is grown in level country, but paddies are also found in such magnificently terraced



country as that of the Ifugao mountains. But sugar is the backbone of Philippine export economy, accounting for half of the public revenues and sustaining 4,000,000 people. It could not survive the imposition of American tariffs. These carabaos are

seen munching what is left in a stripped cane field in one of the picturesque Philippine landscapes.

Next comes the production of coconut oil from copra, the first step of which is seen here as a Filipino boy breaks open the

shells in a primitive but extremely effective manner.

The man with the strange bundle on his head is carrying hemp, from which the best rope in the world is made. About half the production is controlled by Japanese.

Independence would probably mean the end of this busy shipping scene at Manila unless the Japanese felt inclined to take over the islands. And it is doubtful if the few well-drilled Filipino troops, such as shown here, could stop them.

