

# Freedom, Little Else, for the Philippines

MANILA (By Wireless).

**T**HE Philippine Commonwealth expects to become a free republic on July 4. No nation has ever been born into the world of sovereign peoples more naked. Its swaddling clothes will be an enormous public debt, unless Uncle Sam blankets the infant republic with American gold. As a new nation the Philippines are not starting from scratch; they are starting with a staggering handicap of cities devastated, fertile lands left fallow and industries shattered. The funds for reconstruction have been depleted or stolen. Even the herds of stolid carabao, the Filipino farmer's friend and mainstay for a hundred years, have been reduced 40 per cent by the war.

Japanese prisoners of war are doing some of the work of reconstruction in the cities which they and their fellow-soldiers burned or wantonly dynamited when it became apparent that the avenging Yankees would regain the empire Japan had stolen three years before. Frequently Filipinos by the roadside hurl stones at trucks carrying the hated "hapo" to their mean tasks. The other day near Army press headquarters a Filipino woman had to be restrained by MP's as she ripped off one of her wooden slippers and attempted an assault on Japanese prisoners. She was screaming, "That kind killed my husband."

The Japanese killed men of the Philippines by the thousands. They did not spare women and children either, and completed these outrages by burning their homes.

Virtually all public buildings in the Philippines are untenable ruins. Irreplaceable public records are destroyed. Government bureaus are housed in buildings that are only ruined to a lesser degree. Schools and colleges are blasted to rubble, books are burned, many teachers are dead. Art treasures are gone forever. A high Philippine official sadly remarked the other day, "We have even a shortage of talent now, so many died in the war."

**T**HE United States Congress is now studying appropriations of half a billion dollars for Philippine rehabilitation. The program drawn up by the Manila Government calls for at least three times that as a stable member of a free family of sovereign peoples. Where will the money come from? From the United States? From Japan, as reparations?

The Philippine Government answers at the outset with a fear, voiced also by some Americans, that pouring large amounts of United States money into the Philippines would aggravate the already volcanic inflation in the islands. To this the reply is that the money would go right back to the United States for machinery, in which the Philippines today are among the neediest of the world's countries.

The Philippines do not lack either manpower or able Government administrators, although in this connection it must be pointed out that the islands are desperately in need of rehabilitation, political as well as physical, industrial and cultural. There is an explosive political situation in the collaborationist issue and the determined demand for agrarian reform by peasants who are now being armed with guerrilla guns.

Government officials in office today discount the talk in the United States of a prospective Filipino revolution, but anyone can see that the present Government of the Philippines is not standing on firm ground.

**Poverty and wreckage are war's legacy to the nation that will soon be a republic.**

By ROBERT TRUMBULL



Filipino family—"A people who would not be beaten by adversity."

When the Americans landed at Leyte on Oct. 24, 1944, the Philippines were well on the way to ruin through the dismantling and removal of industrial machinery to Japan, and the slaughter of animals for food, which later forced 40 per cent of the cultivated land into disuse. Thus the main business of the islands—agriculture—is in chaos. The coup de grâce to the Philippines—the reduction of their beautiful cities to rubble—came later.

**A**MERICAN shellfire did some of it when the Japanese fought house to house during their retreat in the towns. Most was done by the Japanese themselves in wanton destruction. The torch was put to Manila, a city once so beautiful that it was

called "the Pearl of the Orient." Today the Philippine capital has hardly a building of any kind that stands unmarked by injury. Some streets are dusty shambles. Palm trees that once provided shade and coolness are sick, dejected-looking and brown with dust.

Manila's cathedral and many churches are hideous shells. Colleges are gutted and torn. Broad campuses are grown with weeds and pocked with shellholes. Magnificent Government buildings, many of them completed only in 1941, are horrible caricatures, fashionable apartment houses and the luxurious Manila Hotel are wrecks. Even the statues in the parks are nicked and broken.

Other cities—Cebu, Zamboanga, Baguio

—and dozens of smaller municipalities tell the same depressing story.

The Philippine Government estimates that the replacement or reconstruction of lost and damaged public and private properties will cost at least 1,600,000,000 pesos—\$800,000,000. A large share of this sum would be spent for restoring the city of Manila.

How long it will take to rebuild the capital depends upon many unpredictable factors. Some officials say that the work will require twenty years. That period could well be reasonable enough, for Manila today with its dirt and discomfort, its war-born inflation and spotty system of public utilities, can be called a habitable place only because close to a million people have to live there.

**T**HE reconstruction of the Philippines presupposes the rehabilitation of industry, and this in turn depends upon the re-establishment of shipping. The cement, roofing and other building materials needed in the Philippines are not there any more, and there is no machinery for making them.

José Camus, Under-Secretary of Agriculture and Commerce, prepared for the writer the following rough estimate of losses and damages to the most important Philippine industries:

Livestock	81,202,707 pesos
Rice	140,291,000 pesos
Sugar	94,590,000 pesos
Coconut	51,464,800 pesos
Abaca	40,417,000 pesos
Tobacco	13,302,000 pesos
Fishing	20,145,000 pesos
Lumber	19,948,000 pesos
Mining	121,210,000 pesos

"In addition to the tangible losses," says Mr. Camus, "a large portion of the Government income derived from these industries was also lost. In the case of export industries—sugar, abaca, coconut, tobacco and mining—practically the entire exportation has been lost."

A general plan of rehabilitation drawn up by the Philippine Commonwealth Government envisages an expenditure of 24,500,000 pesos for the replacement of damaged and lost productive equipment alone. The acquisition of adequate transportation equipment will cost 5,300,000 pesos, the Bureau of Commerce estimates. Twenty-two million pesos will be needed for importation of breeding stock, for work, meat and dairy animals.

What has happened to the Philippines' basic industry of agriculture is a dismal story. First of all, the Japanese confiscated everything that could be used in making war. Many modern Filipino farmers had tractors. These were taken. Virtually every bit of iron material was seized—even iron bars from windows. Tin cans were precious metal to the poor Japanese. There is in Manila today a pile of cans that the Japanese had been keeping under guard for future use.

**H**UNGRY peasants began eating their animals—which could not be replaced. Gone now are 1,313,294 carabao, the sturdy Cambodian water buffalo which is the ubiquitous work animal of the rice paddies. Because the Filipinos plant their rice in flooded paddies—and this cannot be changed to any considerable extent because of terrain requirements—these animals cannot be replaced by tractors.

The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which has an office in Manila, (Continued on Page 48)

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has been asked for 22,000,000 pesos to finance the importation of stock from India, French Indo-China, Malaya and Burma. Until the carabao arrive the Philippines cannot produce a normal crop of rice, which is the island's staple food.

**B**EFORE 1941 the Philippines were barely self-sufficient in rice, and in many years, when typhoons and locusts damaged the crop, 200,000 to 300,000 sacks had to be imported from neighboring countries in the Orient. Rice production this season is estimated by the Department of Agriculture to be 40 per cent of normal, and the shortage must be covered by importation. There is some supplementing of the diet with wheat, but with the Filipinos the necessity of eating bread instead of rice is a serious hardship.

The sick condition of the rice industry is one of the main reasons for the terrific price inflation. A ganta—a little more than four pounds—of rice before the war cost 25 centavos—12½ cents. Now on the black market—which often is the only market—the same quantity costs 2½ to 3 pesos.

Officials of the Philippine Agriculture Department say frankly that there is no remedy for inflation until the rice industry is rehabilitated. Inflation, in turn, is responsible for much of the Philippines' internal unrest.

Farmers have voiced such a determined opposition to the centuries-old land tenancy system that the Government has hastened to amend the law so that the tenant gets up to 80 per cent of the crop instead of 50 per cent.

Mining, the Philippines' second industry, is also prostrate as a result of the war. In 1940 gold was produced by forty-eight companies to the value of 76,000,000 pesos, which was 83 per cent of the Philippines' total mineral output. The Japanese took over the mine machinery to work extensive Philippine deposits of copper, manganese and chromite which were desperately needed in the war plants of Honshu. Today the Philippine mining industry is virtually stripped of machinery.

A third important industry of the Philippines is coconut production, in which these islands before the war led the world. Approximately 4,200,000 Filipinos, or a quarter of the population, were dependent upon the gigantic coconut plantations—principally in the Laguna and Tayabas provinces of Luzon—for their living.

**T**ODAY the price of copra is low and labor in the Philippines—where the United States Army is probably the largest single employer—comes high. It costs more to produce a coconut than you can sell it for. However, even should the labor market subside and the price of copra go up, there still remains the necessity for a large loan to repair damaged or lost—seized by the Japanese—copra dryers, warehouses, coconut oil mills and factories for shredded coconuts.

The Philippines tobacco industry is so badly off that there is talk of partial Government control. Sugar production may be back to normal in 1948 if a loan of 60,000,000 pesos can be floated immediately.

Lately consumer goods have been coming in and Manila's business community is beginning to take on its pre-war complexion with startling speed. Incoming ships and planes bring more and more American business men—some newcomers, some "old Manila hands."

Civilian cars are becoming fa-



Filipino fighter.

miliar sights on the dusty, pock-marked streets. Inside the horribly shell-scarred facades of business buildings one can now meet an occasional American business man in a crisp, white broadcloth shirt and—of all things in this country so newly out of the war—a neat necktie.

**D**ESPITE the extremely parlous times ahead in the first groping days of independence, the Filipino people face the future with the same happy confidence that sustained their hopes in the blackest times of Japanese occupation. Loss of their personal property and destruction of their buildings appear to leave them undaunted. They figure that business will come back and that their cities and their personal fortunes will be rebuilt, though there may be scars forever unhealed. They have also the comforting belief that Uncle Sam will continue to help his Filipino nephews.

This correspondent's Filipino jeep driver exemplifies perfectly the spirit of his people. As we happened recently to pass a once respectable residence, now a blackened gutted shell of a house, he pointed and said, "That used to be my home. I'm living in a little shack out of town now, but I've got this job and I work for the Army nights too. Pretty soon I'll have a nice home again."

The Philippines are still a treasure house. Though the facade is a battered ruin, the wealth is still in the ground, and the brains and brawn of 17,000,000 people are still available. That is the sum of the Commonwealth's assets today, as it stands on the threshold of independence.