

# FILIPINOS STILL DIVIDED ON FREEDOM

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Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

MANILA, Jan. 27—Despite Manuel Quezon's latest dictum to the National Assembly that he is unalterably opposed to the continuation of the present political set-up beyond 1946, the real desires of the Filipino people regarding independence remain among the international imponderables.

An act passed by Congress and approved by the Philippine Legislature in 1934 provided for a ten-year transitional government with a Filipino Chief Executive before the granting of independence, and for the continuance of reciprocal free trade relations for that period. The United States has pledged itself to abandon military bases in the islands.

While it might have seemed reasonable to assume that Quezon's statement of unalterable opposition to the present arrangement would be accepted at face value and would put a quietus on speculation regarding independence, on the contrary, it aroused more speculation. The small but powerful Filipino party in favor of re-examination continued to insist that 80 per cent of Filipinos do not want independence in 1946.

## Quezon Criticized

Quezon's political critics accuse him of equivocating and temporizing. They said that if he really meant what he seemed to mean, he would not have used the words, "present political set-up," which might merely indicate that he does not wish to see the Commonwealth status continued. In other words, he can still, at a later date, ask for a dominion status such as that which Canada has.

One thing seems to be proved. There has been a lessening of war fears here. Fighting in Europe has not crippled Philippine economy or jeopardized the status of small nations in Asia. Many profess to believe that this had much to do with Quezon's carefully balanced pronouncement regarding aspirations for Philippine independence, although his real reasons for speaking about it at this time are shaded with political complexities.

The re-examinationists, who are campaigning for the postponement of independence day, are the only ones on their side of the fence who are willing to speak frankly. They say they have fifteen members of the National Assembly and forty or fifty other influential business men and educators in their so-called Philippine civic league.

## Dominion Status Urged

They want a dominion status for the Philippines, with increased autonomy in trade matters and a new arrangement for mutual preferential trade between the United States and the Philippines, with equal advantages for both.

Salvador Araneta, Manila lawyer and recognized spokesman for the

## Quezon's Stand Fails To Settle the Main Question for 1946

re-examinationists, says that 60 per cent of the Filipinos favor a continuation of political relations with America after 1946, and if more autonomy were assured to the islands the percentage of such sentiment would rise to 90.

"Prior to political independence, we want economic independence," Araneta says. "We do not believe that the Philippines are ready to support economic independence in 1946. Many politicians think as we do, but they are afraid to say so because of municipal and provincial elections next December. Also they are not sure that the United States would be willing to grant the kind of change they want to have made in the Independence Law. Quezon said this in so many words during the Assembly speech Monday."

## Indifference Admitted

Araneta disposes of most of the Filipino people on the independence issue by admitting that they are indifferent, but insists that they are willing to follow political leaders and do what they say. It is this great majority of 16,000,000 people which forms an imponderable ele-

ment. They cannot even be reached by a plebiscite.

The total registered vote here at the provincial elections in 1937 was only 2,182,479, while 2,044,141 actually voted.

That represents less than 13 per cent of the population. The rest of the people are difficult to reach, even with government beneficence. The keystone of Quezon's administration has been social justice, but after the most intense effort to raise living standards and better social conditions among the humble farmers and fisher folk it is still considered necessary to dispatch political speakers into remoter sections to tell the people what the government is doing for them.

## Concern With Daily Life

They are largely indifferent to any problems except those closely connected with day-to-day living, which on the whole is comfortable enough in comparison with other Asiatic inhabitants in a similar status.

Among those who actually hold strong opinions on independence, pro or con, there are not many sectional demarkations.

Most often it is a matter of personal conviction, based on idealism or reasoning. It is assumed that the strongest undercurrent against independence exists among the rich, property-owning Filipinos, especially the sugar interests. The re-examinationist party denies that there is a preponderance of sugar interests in their membership. They argue that not a single re-examinationist in the Assembly comes from a sugar province.

Many school teachers willingly admit opposition to independence. Professional people take the same stand. Organized labor is fairly solid against independence. The workers have been told frankly by their leaders that independence will mean lower wages, owing to a certain loss of a free market for Philippine goods and the crumbling of many key agricultural industries.

Several fairly representative straw votes have been taken on the independence question, all unofficial. Few indicate really definite trends. They average fifty-fifty with various alternatives.

## The Fear of Japan

The fear of Japanese aggression, according to these surveys, seems fairly universal, but the slow progress of the war in China seems to have retarded apprehension. The European war had a considerable effect in the Philippines during its early stages, driving prices of basic commodities to new three-year highs, depressing the stock markets and increasing living costs.

Unwarranted price boosting, especially among the Chinese merchants, caused the government to start a stringent price-control system, which apparently is working acceptably.

## HIS PEOPLE DIVIDED



Sparacino  
 Manuel Quezon, President of the Philippines, where independence is a debated question.