

FILIPINOS UNEASY ON INDEPENDENCE

Big Need for Rehabilitation and Groups Still Under Arms Present Problems

COMMITMENT HELD RIGID

Politicians Hesitate to Shift Ground, but See Menace in Lack of Public Order

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By Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

MANILA, Dec. 29 — Most Filipinos do not want unqualified independence on July 4, 1946, but so many Philippine politicians are committed to independence that they feel they dare not back down now. American official quarters know this but we too are committed. Therefore it appears that in six months these islands will be cast loose, sorely unprepared, despite the best opinion both here and in the United States.

Independence in the Philippines on July 4, 1946, will surely be followed, perhaps not by revolution—for the dissidents are not that strong—but certainly by disorders with which the Philippine authorities are admittedly unable to cope.

These opinions are not only those of the writer, but also of many Filipinos both high and humbly placed whom this correspondent has interviewed both in Manila and in the central Luzon provinces during the past three months.

Yet all the politicians questioned unhesitatingly declared that no candidate for a Commonwealth office could be elected on a platform advocating a postponement of independence. Both candidates and voters have been following for too many years the independence line of the dominant Nacionalista party and thus they have an ideal by the tail and dare not let it go.

The official view of the United States, as voiced by High Commissioner Paul V. McNutt, is that the Tydings-McDuffie Act, granting to the Philippines full independence on July 4, 1946, cannot be amended unless it is so demanded by the Philippine Commonwealth. Numerous Filipino leaders have told this correspondent privately that a plebiscite should be held on the independence question. However, for local political reasons no one was ready to advocate a plebiscite publicly.

Filipinos have declared, overwhelmingly, that they wanted independence some day soon—but not in six months, for the country is prostrate financially, devastated physically, and disorganized socially.

Three Years Lost Out

The Governor of one central Luzon province summed up the situation thus:

"At the time the Tydings-McDuffie Act was passed, the Philippines were to have had ten years to prepare for independence. The war has taken three years away. Before independence the Philippines should have restored to them at least that three years for rehabilitation."

There are two main factors that are causing the Filipinos to doubt, privately, the wisdom of unqualified independence on July 4, 1946. They are the rehabilitation problem and internal social unrest.

Rehabilitation is retarded just now by the reluctance of American capital to enter the islands under the present unsettled political conditions. Businessmen are not sure what restrictive policies might be adopted by the government of the Philippine Republic.

Both President Sergio Osmeña and Manuel Roxas, who are contending for the presidency, have expressed the strongest desire to encourage American capital. But it is felt generally among interested Americans that should Mr. Roxas win the presidency, Spanish capital, which is backing his candidacy, would have a preference.

On the question of internal unrest, provincial officials interviewed by this correspondent are unanimously of the opinion that Philippine military police will be unable to keep order.

The basis of the Philippine police problem is the unauthorized possession of arms by former guerrillas. President Osmeña's proclamation and those of Provincial Governors asking that these arms be surrendered have been almost totally ignored. Competent authorities in Pampanga, Tarlac and the Mountain Provinces last week told this correspondent that there were 40,000 loose arms in those three localities alone.

Use of Arms Feared

Provincial civil authorities and both Philippine Army and U. S. Army military police officers have admitted that these arms could be gathered in only by a "combat operation." American military police in Tarlac Province have been ambushed and fired upon when they ventured into the hills. In both Pampanga and Tarlac, according to the Governors of those provinces, municipal officials have been terrorized by armed bands suspected of belonging to the dissident peasants' "Huhbalahap" organization.

There has been an abnormal rate of kidnapping, murder and robbery in Central Luzon, mostly attributed to the "Huks." There have been numerous reported instances of raids upon small barrios [villages] by armed groups seeking more arms.

Philippine Army military police in some districts, whose responsibility it will be to maintain order when the Americans pull out, have admitted their inability to cope with the loose arms problem in interviews with this correspondent. "If we are ordered to bring in these weapons," said one officer, "it means fighting."

Party Split Definite

MANILA, Dec. 29 (AP)—Newspapers today headlined a political split between President Sergio

Osmeña and Manuel Roxas as "official."

The Osmeña wing of the majority Nacionalista party in a caucus last night refused to accept Mr. Roxas' terms for remaining in the party and participating in the party convention, the papers said. The split had been threatened for

months. Informed quarters still believed, however, there might be an Osmeña-Roxas unity ticket in the coming election as neither side definitely has closed the door to further negotiations.

Mr. Osmeña, as titular head of the Nacionalistas, set the party convention for Jan. 21.