

CUBAN AND PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE

CHESTER LLOYD JONES

AT Manila on November 15, 1935, before a throng reported to number fifteen thousand guests and a quarter of a million other enthusiastic spectators, Manuel Quezón took the oath of office as first President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. It is the latest of the acts which have marked the growth of the policy of the United States toward the communities with which it became more closely associated as a result of the Spanish-American War. The occasion prompts a review of these developments shot through with motives of altruism and self-interest to a degree perhaps unequalled by any other features of American history.

The treaty signed with Spain on December 10, 1898, gave to the United States new political responsibilities in Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico and Guam.¹ Sharp divisions of opinion developed as to the policies to which the agreement should lead the Republic; but the vote by which the treaty was ratified did not divide on closely partisan lines.

The political relationship of the units to the United States promptly came up for definition. Except for Cuba, the islands had been "ceded" outright by the treaty. The United States had no legal or moral obligation to "set them free," though one group among American citizens from the beginning sought grant of freedom to the Philippines. For Puerto Rico and Guam there was no serious demand for independence at the time, nor has any developed since. Decisions by the courts as to the status of the three units put under the American flag followed promptly, and brought divisions of opinion in the highest of our tribunals seldom equalled in our judicial record.

The relationship to Cuba, however, fell in the field of policy rather than in that of constitutional law. When the *Teller Amendment* had been adopted by Congress on April 20th, 1898, at the time of the break with Spain, it was declared that "the people of the island of Cuba are and of right ought to be free and independent." It was a one-sided declaration expressing the intent of the

1. Text in William M. Malloy, *Treaties, Conventions, International Acts, Protocols and Agreements between the United States of America and Other Powers, 1776-1909*. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1910, Vol. II, pp. 1690-1695 (Senate Document No. 357, 61st Cong. 2d Sess.)

United States, not the fact, for the government of the Cuban revolutionists had not been and was not later "recognized" as independent. It was a unilateral declaration which bound no one. It was a statement of the desire of the American people as expressed by their Congress.

Cuba had long been considered an area in which the people to the north had a special interest. Declarations to that effect went back to the earliest years following the establishment of the Republic, and indeed even to an earlier period. Early in the nineteenth century statesmen had looked forward to the time when the island should form a part of the Union. By the time of the war with Spain it was already a heavy supplier of one of the greatest import staples, sugar. It would become, it was clear, a trade area of increasing importance. It would attract great American enterprise and investment. The spread of American interest in the Caribbean region, which had been going on steadily for two generations, made Cuba a factor not only in economic developments but in the national safety. Havana was only 106 miles from Key West, and the island lay at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico. If American interests continued to spread southward, Cuba would be a major factor in the development, especially if the Panama canal were built.

The historical relations with the Philippine Islands stood in high contrast. They had never been an "American interest" in any intimate sense. Trade with them was not great; and unless it were stimulated by artificial tariff arrangements, it seemed likely to continue to be of minor value. Nor would American capital, then seeking investment abroad only in small amount, find the islands an attractive place for employment. Political interest in the Philippines had been negligible. Manila was more than 7,000 miles distant from San Francisco. Far away, the territory would be a liability to the navy, and a possible source of friction with other Powers. Nevertheless the course of events made the Philippines a part of the national territory, and Cuba an independent republic. It seemed a contradictory development, but anomalies of the sort have many precedents, and this was by no means the only one which developed in American policy toward the two island areas.

In Cuba the expected developments became facts. The close political bonds which the United States felt essential were established. They were not welcomed with unalloyed enthusiasm by the new nation which was coming into being, but they were accepted. The independence of the island was guaranteed, and the United

States was given special privileges not enjoyed in other sovereign states.

Economic connections with Cuba steadily increased in importance. A reciprocity treaty was made, giving special favours to the trade between the two nations. It would bind them to each other economically even more closely than their political community of interest. It would affect particularly the sugar trade. There was no important production of the staple in the United States in the early years of the century, and the rise of a great sugar industry in Cuba could supply a rapidly rising demand to the northward. Increase of such activity it was thought might make Cuba economically strong, politically more stable, better able to defend its own independence and to support the strategic defence of the United States. As a result of the policy adopted, practically the entire United States import market for sugar was delivered over to the island. Investments in its borders grew apace. Cuba was being bound to the United States in relations of "peculiar intimacy", as one group in public affairs had felt desirable. It was a move toward economic internationalism.

But at the same time a nationalist movement was under way in the United States itself, which looked in a diametrically opposite direction, and was in time to reverse the earlier economic American policy toward Cuba in fact while continuing it in form.

Beet sugar production increased in the continental United States, and cane sugar yield advanced in near-by Puerto Rico and in the far away Philippines. All this, it was argued, was "national" production. That in Cuba was "foreign." There arose an interesting anomaly. First the treaty giving Cuba, as compared to other foreign countries, special percentage favours under the tariff was maintained, but at the same time the rate of tariff charges on all "foreign" sugars was pushed upward. The result was that "national" sugars—including those from the Philippines—received increased advantages over Cuban sugars, though Cuban sugars enjoyed still greater favours over other foreign sugars.

So far as Cuba and the Philippines were concerned, these adjustments pushed the nearer country, to which our fortunes were closely bound, farther away from us, and drew the far distant area nearer—for Philippine sugars entered without paying any tariff at all. Peculiar consequence,—Cuba in some years paid more than a fourth of the total duty on all dutiable imports. This was indeed a queer outcome for a policy which started out to bind the island to us in relations of "peculiar intimacy". The nation given favours

greater than "the most favoured nation" found itself the nation least favoured of all.

The more recent changes in American policy as to Cuban sugar are further illustrations of actions which on the surface seem to confer special favours, but which do not prevent other acts which may do much to snatch away the benefit conferred. Under authority given by Congress the rates on Cuban sugar have been reduced by presidential action. A new commercial treaty has been entered into, effective September 3, 1934. Under these measures Cuban sugar now pays only .9 cent per pound as tariff. Cuba thus receives lower rates than before, and the advantage of national sugar is reduced.

But what is given with one hand may be taken away by the other. Cuban merchants could formerly sell us as much as they pleased, providing they could get their goods over the tariff wall. But the latest device in sugar policy has been to limit the amount they can sell us by a wall which can not be scaled at all. Cuba can now sell us sugar only up to a definite "quota." As revised August 18th, 1935, the island may market in the United States not over 1,822,596 short tons in a total estimated national consumption of 6,276,652. Under freer conditions, but under a higher rate of tariff, Cuba sold us twice as much. We have not strangled the Cuban sugar industry, but we have put it on a ration.

Meanwhile our policies as to the far away Philippines have also not lacked in contradictory features. One political group among Americans have been consistent in their continued opposition to keeping the Philippines as national territory—and the Filipinos, so far as they are vocal, have applauded their position. In recent years the Philippine legislature has repeatedly passed by unanimous consent a resolution in favour of complete independence. Another group in the United States has felt that American control should be continued indefinitely until the people of the Philippines have thoroughly mastered the art of self-government. What has American policy been, under the impulse of these conflicting desires?

Over the long period since annexation the general policy has been toward giving the local population greater measures of "independence" looking toward their ultimate separation from the United States. The Jones Act passed by the United States Congress August 29, 1916, declared that "it has always been the purpose of the people of the United States to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands, and to recognize their independence as soon as a stable government can be established therein." It also created

greater autonomy for the local government. Now under the Tydings-McGuffey Act further steps have been taken in the same direction. The islands have been given commonwealth status, and are to be independent at the end of a decade. The political connections created by the treaty of December 10, 1898, are to be dissolved.¹

On the economic side the development has been in the other direction. The Philippines have been brought into closer and closer association with the United States. Whether the policy followed over the last generation has been in all ways advantageous is a matter of opinion, but the fact is that in the course of the years the United States and the Philippines have been brought nearer and nearer to being an economic unit.

During the first eleven years under American sovereignty, duties on Philippine *imports* from the United States and all other countries were identical. After 1901 duties on Philippine exports entering the United States were made twenty-five per cent lower than those on goods from foreign countries. Other revisions were later adopted and on October 5, 1909, substantial free trade between the United States and the Philippine Islands became effective.

The economic interdependence which has been established by the trade created under these conditions has bound the interests of the distant parties closely together. Philippine production and exports of sugar, cocoanut oil, cigars, cordage, hats and embroideries have risen spectacularly. Philippine purchasing power has increased, and the insular standard of living has risen. Total values of imports and exports rose from 68,100,000 pesos in 1899 to a peak at 623,200,000 pesos in 1929, thereafter to decline to 388,000,000 pesos in 1934. Trade with the United States was 10,600,000 pesos in 1899; 434,000,000 in 1929 and 292,400,000 in 1934. Of the total trade of the Philippines, 15.9 per cent was with the United States in 1899 and 75.3 per cent in 1934. This close connection between far distant areas, built up largely through the agency of tariff arrangements, has been of economic advantage to both parties, but especially to the Philippines. That the islanders realize.

Now, however, the national policy changes. The islands are to become politically "independent." What will be the economic position of the islands, once the group graduates from commonwealth status to full sovereignty? That is a question which already has begun to trouble the local leaders. They would doubtless be glad to see continue the relationship which has been economically so profitable. But they can hardly hope that the economic bonds will remain unchanged when political connections are dissolved.

1. Public—No. 127 73rd Congress. (H. R. 8573). Approved, March 24, 1934.

Cuba, much more closely associated with the United States than are the Philippines, has found that American domestic policy dominates foreign commercial policy, and that the best wishes of the neighbour do not automatically bring favorable commercial rates. Nor does the policy proposed even for the ten years probation period contemplate such conditions for the Philippines.

It is already clear that the American move toward nationalism evident in the treatment of Cuba is not confined to Cuban relations. Groups among those in the United States who were disposed to consider the Philippines as associated with the strongest of American nations for an indefinite period now demand that independence be promptly granted. They have been impelled to do so not by desire to free the Philippines politically from the United States, but by the wish to free the United States economically from the Philippines.

Cuba lies at our doorstep. Cuban trade comes to us not through the manipulations of the tariff only, but because of its geographic position, and because the exports of each country are the needs of the other. Investments of American capital have been welcomed there and were valued on December 1, 1933, at \$951,000,000. Cuba is an essential part of the present day "American System" both economically and politically. Disorder there touches us in a very real way. Her safety is our safety.

No such statements can be made about the Philippines. They are far away. Their trade to us is explained by legislation more than by the flow of natural forces. American investment in Philippine enterprises is small, restrained by local laws, and will presumably continue to be thus limited. Only some \$92,000,000 of American capital have found employment in local enterprises. Some \$65,000,000 have gone into Philippine bonds. Legislation already adopted indicates that such economic interests as we have in the islands we are content to see diminish. In time of crisis we can not effectively defend the islands, if we would. They are a distant interest. Our announced policy is to break down what political connection with them now exists. Still we assume rights and responsibilities toward them which we discard in an area from the fortunes of which we cannot disengage ourselves.

Those who doubt the wisdom of assuming special responsibilities for order anywhere—whether in Cuba or in the Philippines—may take some satisfaction in the fact that the engagements in the latter are limited in time. The ten years will soon be over. At their expiry we and they will be free. What then?

Then national policy toward the islands will become international policy. The questions to be answered as to the status of

the Philippines will be much more difficult than any thus far faced in connection with the territories with which the Spanish-American war associated us. They will not be easy for those who stand for the right of all peoples to rule themselves, or for those Americans who defend their nationalistic interests, or for the Filipinos with their new-found freedom.

Fiscal problems will have to be met. Even through President Quezón's speech celebrating the recently taken step toward independence there runs a current of apprehension as to how the government can finance itself. Once outside the legislation which in the past generation has given the islands so favorable and so artificial an economic position, where can the funds be secured to run a government capable of protecting life, property, and individual liberty? Can the Philippines "afford" to be free?

But the economic difficulties do not receive the major part of the President's attention. Over one-third of his address deals with the problem of political order—during and after the probationary period. Even within the Commonwealth that will be a problem, and rebellious elements within the islands are warned that the government will not hesitate to use the army to keep the peace. He looks ahead, too, to the period of full freedom. Then "if we prove ourselves incapable of the protection of life, liberty and property of nationals and foreigners, we shall be exposed to the danger of intervention of foreign powers."

The widespread agitation by the followers of Aguinaldo already foreshadows domestic problems which may prove serious, and the disputes over the status of Japanese in Davao show the danger that complications in foreign affairs may trouble the new government, in the probation period and after.

In the long view the new Cuban policy, the new Philippine constitution and the independent government which is to arise from it have significance less from the formal positions they have now and will have in the future, than from the conditions which lie in the background and toward which they point.

The United States is changing its policy, has changed it. The political responsibilities it assumed by treaty in Cuba it has brought to an end. It is a change in form more than in substance. After all, treaties neither establish nor terminate the primary relations of neighboring nations. The association of Cuba and the United States rests on geography and economic and political interests which treaties may confirm but can do little to modify.

Also from the responsibilities in the Far East, which it assumed a generation ago, the United States now seeks to withdraw. It

ushered Cuba into the family of nations a generation ago; within a decade it will effect the entry of the Philippines. Young Cuba, however, started its career under the treaty protection of the United States. It continues under protection of the United States in fact, even though now the formal treaty no longer exists. The Philippines will be in a different position. Here political engagements may greatly alter the degree of unity of interests. There is no relation of neighborhood here, no unity of economic and political fortunes. The connection of the islands and the United States through the past generation has not been organic. It has been almost the result of accident.

The severance of American and Philippine fortunes will be dictated only in part by a combination of altruistic national and international considerations. Some there doubtless are who will still sincerely believe that in starting the new nation on its way the United States is fostering a noble aspiration of the local population for self-government, making a grand gesture in support of free institutions. It is not necessary to raise at this point the question as to whether the people of the Philippines will be able to establish a democracy or not. Those who convince themselves that enthusiasm for self-government is the controlling motive in granting freedom to the islands overlook other influences of far-reaching character.

New champions of the cause of island "liberty" have risen in the United States as economic nationalism has gained in popularity. The enthusiasts of a generation ago who wished to free "the little brown brother" are now joined by other enthusiasts who wish to free themselves from "the little brown brother's" competition. By one means or another this competition must be eliminated. It can be done, and is already done in a degree by "quota." In the long run it may be done more effectively by tariffs—when the Philippines are "free." To these groups the enthusiasm for making the Philippines a "republic" is less strong than the enthusiasm for making them foreign".

Former staunch supporters of close political affiliation have thus become enthusiastic advocates of economic separation. They have come to realize that Philippine sugar like Cuban sugar competes with the yield of the continental United States, and that Philippine sugar has had the advantage of entry with payment of no tariff at all. Southern cotton producers complain that Philippine cocoanut oils cut into the markets for the oil from their cottonseed. Northern dairy interests urge that importation of Philippine oils threatens the prosperity of their industry. Tobacco growers

look with disfavor on imports of Philippine cigars. These interests are much more widespread than are the sugar producers who have so successfully influenced the policy toward Cuba. Since they feel themselves damaged, they now propose to "free" the Philippines.

Already quotas have been adopted for Philippine products, and tariff restrictions are just ahead. Not a few of the votes which put the islands on the way to political freedom through the legislation for the commonwealth came from men who were moved more by enthusiasm for American economic nationalism than by the desire that the Philippines should enjoy the blessings of self-government. The trend toward economic interdependence is being reversed for the Philippines as it has been for Cuba. The prospect for the islanders is not pleasant. Where can markets be found for the now greatly increased Philippine products, if that in the United States is closed or reduced?

In 1934 the islands sold abroad sugar to the value of 130,909,161 pesos. Of the total 130,889,986 pesos value went to the United States. Of 10,387,532 pesos worth of tobacco products, 6,727,306 went to the United States. The other chief exports show similar relationships. Some 31 per cent of the exported hemp, 42 per cent of copra meal, 45 per cent of copra, 99 per cent of cocoanut oil, and 100 per cent of dessicated and shredded cocoanut went to the American market.

These are the great Philippine exports. Where will the future markets lie under post-commonwealth legislation? What will the effect of narrower markets be upon public income, public services, public order, public safety? What will be the effect on the standard of life in the islands, accepted to have been raised far above that in neighboring Asiatic tropic areas? There is no satisfactory answer to these questions.

Some groups in the United States may still support the movement for Philippine independence from altruistic motives. They wish to "spread the blessings of self-government among the peoples of the world." Others will advocate freedom for the islands because close association, they believe, damages their own interests. Whatever the motive which prompts the voters, the result for the islanders is the same. Their freedom will, indeed, call on them for sacrifice. Freedom will come with great economic hardships, lowering of the standard of life of the people, and possible bankruptcy in government. It may induce the very conditions of weakness and disorder all are anxious to avoid, and bring the breakdown of the very institutions of popular government which the sponsors of "independence" avow their desire to promote.

The changes in the economic policy of the United States toward Cuba and the Philippines are not more marked than those in the field of political relations. The special political position upon which the United States insisted when Cuba was being launched as an independent country was not without embarrassments. From the first it gave rise to conflicts of opinion as to the extent of the authority which the United States might exercise. The clauses of the Platt Amendment, as they came popularly to be called, were never popular in Cuba. They did cause friction in the relations of the governments. Honest difference of opinion exists as to whether they were, on balance, an advantage to the parties. However that may be, their "repeal" was a favorite demand of the leaders in island politics.

After experience of a generation with the clauses, experience by no means uniform in character, opinion in the United States brought abandonment of its right to insist on "the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty" in Cuba. A new agreement was proclaimed by the President on June 9, 1934.

Whatever the judgment may be, it might at least be expected that what had come to be considered an unfortunate and discredited formula for Cuban relations would be thrown over in all cases in which circumstances were substantially comparable. But an ordinance attached to the Constitution which President Quezōn took oath to support on November 15, 1935, reserves to the United States in the Philippines "the right to intervene for the preservation of the government... and for the protection of life, property and individual liberty..."

Thus in July, 1934, we abandoned for Cuba a formula we profess to find discredited by experience, to grasp it in November, 1935, for use in the Philippines. Will the measure which is alleged to have produced friction and ill-will in the one case promote good feeling and friendship in the other?

Of course the cases are different. In Cuba the rights were exercised in an independent nation. The Philippines are still a commonwealth. Cuba perhaps resented the formal statement of the right of intervention because it felt that it was unnecessary. The United States would defend the island's independence any way. Intervention by any other power would be unlikely in any case. Perhaps the Philippines may look on the special right given to the United States with greater complaisance because it may feel less secure. Perhaps Cuba would feel less disposed to "endure" the

clauses it found objectionable because they were without time limit, while the Commonwealth may accept them since they run only for a ten-year period. All this may be true. What did not work in the new world may work in the old.

Nevertheless, if orderly government is desirable, there is no doubt that a formally recognized right of intervention is of greater importance to the United States in Cuba than in the Philippines. We surrender it in Cuba where our rights and responsibilities are great and permanent; we create it in the Philippines where they are small and transitory.

Last to develop, and probably to develop greater strength than it now has, is the group which emphasizes the need to face naval and military realities in mapping our policy toward the island areas. Their arguments are strengthened by contemporary developments in international politics.

To bring Cuba, near at hand, into the circle of American influence may be to increase the strength of the national position. To take similar action in the Philippines is to decrease it. In time of crisis we must defend Cuba, whether we wish to or not. The Philippines must be made free, it is argued, because we cannot defend their freedom. They must be left to face the problems which the geography of the Far East and political developments in the region create. It is a conclusion which Machiavelli would approve. Perhaps it is one prompted also by the desire to avoid creating a situation fraught with greater dangers for the peace of the world, and with possibility of sacrifices which, after all, would not bring the end desired. To those whose reasoning is controlled by emotion, retirement from the Philippines under such conditions may seem equivalent to saying, "Let us get out of the Philippines with honour if we can, but let us get out." Even to those whose mental processes are more realistic, the policy of retirement so far as it is dictated by these considerations can not be a source of pride.

For the free government of the Philippines what prospect? If the nationalism which now dominates the affairs of the world continues, the narrow foundation upon which Philippine economic life now depends will be narrower. The base upon which the political activities within the islands rest will be less secure. Nor will the international position be easy to assure in the disturbed conditions created in the Eastern world by the ambitions of both Eastern and Western aspirants for power.

Unless a tide sets in toward a more liberal policy in international affairs, economic and political, the outlook of a Philippine Republic

is toward a dark horizon. Political leaders in the commonwealth have often quoted an American statesman credited with bringing his argument to a climax with the plea, "Give me Liberty or give me Death." Unless the efforts for better international understanding make steady progress in the ten-year probationary period just ahead, the Philippine Republic may find that the one is the doorway to the other.