

OUR ORIENTAL RELATIONS—WITH CHINA

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It has been truly said that all matters of human relations are dependent upon the means by which mind reacts upon mind and life upon life, that is, upon the intensity, rapidity, and reach of mental and physical communications. Long ago, in spite of the primitive means of communication that existed at the time, relations of all sorts—trade, social and cultural—existed between China and the Philippines. The Chinese came to the Philippines in the early days and made a lasting contribution to our economic and social life.

During the last hundred years, a series of inventions has transformed our world and the improvement of transportation and communication has strengthened the ties of association between peoples and nations, sometimes even in spite of themselves. While the Philippines is geographically in the Far East, and the Filipinos, as a people, are an Oriental race, the events of world's history have placed us in association with, and under the domination of Western powers for four centuries, so that we have today in the Philippines a people whose culture is the product of the influences of both the East and the West.

There is a common saying among the Filipinos that in case of a fire, we should first ask help from our neighbors. But the contemporary daily civilized life is increasingly dependent on the distant parts of the earth for the products that are to sustain it. And if civilization does not go to pieces because of greed and stupidity, the world faces an inevitable and unending process of integration. Without doubt, the world is now integrated physically and economically. It only remains for the farsighted leaders of different nations to integrate it politically and morally. As H. G. Wells says, civilization is a race between education and catastrophe.

In this fourth year of the Philippine Commonwealth, our people realize that political independence of the Philippines does not mean cessation of relations and association with other nations and peoples. On the contrary, it means that not only should we maintain our friendly relations with the United States once the Philippines is independent, but we should develop and strengthen our relations and associations of friendship and understanding and good-will with all peoples of the world, especially our neighbors in the Orient. It is natural, therefore, that the Filipinos should, at this time, organize associations and societies to foster commercial, cultural, social, and all other forms of relations not only with our neighbors, the Chinese and the Japanese, but also with Western peoples such as the Spaniards, the French, and the Germans. We are beginning to realize

that civilization means cooperation for worthy ends which are beneficial to all peoples.

When we analyze the essential meaning of relations between peoples, we come to the conclusion that exchanges—both material and intellectual—are their fundamental phenomena and essential characteristic. Chinese and Filipinos, China and the Philippines, though racially and geographically close to one another, can really have no vital relations, no worthwhile cooperation between them unless there is vital exchange. It is because people need one another that they seek friendly political, economic, social and cultural relations. It is fortunate for the Chinese and the Filipinos that they naturally possess friendly sentiments for one another for, after all, the real foundation of understanding and of cooperation is found in the mind and the heart. Aristotle said, "He who is incapable of association with others and has no need of such association is either a brute or a god." The Chinese and Filipinos are neither brutes nor gods. As human beings, they need friendly associations and relations with other peoples. The present friendly relations between China and the Philippines, and between the Chinese and Filipinos in the Philippines, are a product of a long historical process and they cannot easily and abruptly be altered in a fundamental way except by long deliberate process.

We are, of course, confronted by many difficult and complicated problems in our relations with China and the Chinese during the Commonwealth period and after independence. We do not have the space even to enumerate these problems, so we are simply mentioning a few of them and give an idea of the present status.

One of the most interesting as well as vital matters is the social relations between the Chinese residents and the Filipinos. It is true that for hundred of years the Chinese have resided throughout the Philippines; many have settled in local communities and married there. While in general it may be said that the social relations between Chinese residents and the Filipinos have been friendly, we had no concrete and definite information on the attitude of the Filipinos towards the Chinese residents until Dr. Serafin Macaraig, of the University of the Philippines, made a study on this question a few years ago. Dr. Macaraig distributed a questionnaire among advanced Filipino men and women students in the different colleges and universities in Manila. They were asked to rank the important foreign groups in the Philippines by answering the following question: With what foreign group will you rather associate or have been associated with, socially and in a business way? The general findings of Dr. Macaraig show that advanced Filipino students rank the foreign groups as follows:

- 1st—Americans
- 2nd—Spaniards
- 3rd—Chinese

This ranking is significant. The fact that Americans rank first would tend to show that educated Filipino men and women are fully appreciative of the value of America's work in the Philippines in training our people for self-government and independence. That the Spaniards should come second should not be a cause for surprise since after the revolution against Spain and the subsequent occupation of our country by the United States, there has been no occasion and no need for friction and conflict with the Spanish group. That the Chinese should rank above the Japanese seems to be natural as the Chinese have been in this country since time immemorial and have contributed greatly to the economic development and general culture of our people and also because through intermarriage, a considerable percentage of Filipinos of today have Chinese blood in their veins. Besides, this group of educated Filipino men and women who answered the questionnaire are acquainted with the events of the world and of the Far East during the last forty years and while they must admire the Japanese people and in justice consider them as leaders among the Orientals in many fields, a good many of them who are acquainted with the annexation of Korea and the history of "Manchukuo" must fear that something similar may happen to the Philippines if the Japanese Empire should, some day, seek expansion towards the South Seas.

We also have the problems that are concerned with Chinese labor and Chinese retail merchants. As a good portion of the retail trade of the country is in the hands of the Chinese and there is a considerable number of Chinese laborers working in shops and factories, any attempt on the part of our government to nationalize labor as well as the retail trade will be felt by the Chinese as something that is especially aimed at them even if the proposed laws should apply to all foreigners residing in the Philippines. The nationalization of labor aims primarily to relieve as far as possible the unemployment situation in the Philippines by having all labor done by citizens of the Philippines or of the United States. Undoubtedly, everyone including the Chinese will be in favor of any measure which will relieve the unemployment situation in the Philippines, for the solution of this problem is the unavoidable responsibility of all elements of the community, including the alien groups.

In this connection, it should be remembered that His Excellency, the President of the Philippines, as well as our economic and civic leaders, believe that only a sound economic development of the country on a national scale will provide permanent employment to those who are able and desire to work. For this purpose, our government has created the National Economic Council and has announced plans for opening up the vast fertile unoccupied regions of the country and for the developing of new industries such as the oil industry, shipping, mining, etc. Let us remember that all foreigners have fundamental civil rights under our Constitution, and in fairness and justice to them, our

government should grant them the full exercise of these rights. As for the Chinese, many of them have been here for years and are the children of old residents and there will be no legal way of deporting them unless they prove to be undesirable aliens instead of merely unemployed.

With regard to the nationalization of retail trade, any law to this effect will principally affect the Chinese and Japanese among the foreign elements in the Philippines. While all Filipinos will be in favor and should do everything to help nationals control more of our own retail trade, we should bear in mind what Assemblyman Benigno S. Aquino said recently on this question, and that is, that any legislation to nationalize retail trade would be expensive, would add more employees to the government, and would make the Philippine government so paternalistic as to kill the individual initiative of our own people. The President also said recently in connection with the National Economic Protectionism campaign that appeals to the patriotism of our people are not sufficient to create a demand for locally made goods. What is necessary is that our people should learn to make things of such quality and to sell them at such price that every one will buy locally-made goods instead of foreign articles. In other words our leaders have full faith in our ability to compete on equal terms with foreigners in our own country. We have shown in other fields of human endeavor that Filipinos have the native capacity and ability to develop so they will come up to universally accepted standards of excellence and of achievement.

Another question which will surely come up soon after the Philippines achieves its status of full political independence from the United States is the matter of naturalization of Chinese who have been residents of this country for a long time and whose ancestors have been here for generations. In the case of many Chinese residents who are not citizens of the Philippines today, they would have applied for citizenship long ago and would have been naturalized citizens if the laws of the United States had made them eligible for it. There are cases of Chinese residents whose children are Filipino citizens because they were born in this country, although they themselves could not be citizens even if they wanted to because of American laws. When the Philippine assumes its independent status as a nation, it is reasonable to expect that no Oriental will be disqualified from acquiring Filipino citizenship on account of his race. Orientals who have been for a long time should be given the opportunity to acquire Filipino citizenship, for many of them have Filipino wives and Filipino children and have helped to build this country not only with their initiative and energy but with their own blood.

Another problem that will surely arise for solution is the control and supervision of those schools that are established and maintained for foreign children and are taught in a foreign language. Under the Constitution of the Philippines, "all educational institutions shall be under the supervision of and subject to regulation by the State", and this wise

provision should be enforced for the preservation and protection of the State. A satisfactory solution must be found whereby the government can supervise all schools and satisfy itself that schools that are taught in a foreign language are not teaching doctrines and principles which are contrary to the welfare of the State that gives them protection.

As to our relations with China as a nation, I believe that we need not fear any aggressive political and economic policies on her part. It is true that China has enjoyed cultural unity since time immemorial, but at present she does not have the compact political organization of a modern state. Being in the painful process of reconstruction reorganization, and rehabilitation, she has at present too many troubles of her own to enable her to adopt an aggressive political and economic attitude and policy towards the Philippines. I am convinced that China has not planned any form of political and economic expansion towards the Philippines directed from the central government at Chungking. Whatever efforts she may exert in this direction for the next ten years will be initiated by private individuals and private organizations rather than by the national government of China as an imperialistic modern state.

Industrial and commercial nations look upon China as the greatest market in the world. As Dr. C. T. Wang once said, to most Western powers China is not a nation but only a market. Filipinos should look upon China first as a nation, a neighboring nation, that is willing to cooperate with us in our economic, social, political and cultural development. But we must look upon China also as a market for we have the advantage of being close to China and of knowing the Chinese and having a tropical country that is position to supply some of her needs. It is a favorite statement among Filipinos that if the Chinese will only use a tea-spoon of sugar every time they drink a cup of tea, the Philippines could not produce enough sugar to supply the demand. But we must remember that the Chinese do not drink tea with sugar and probably will not drink it with sugar for a long time, so it is up to us to supply her with things that she needs and uses rather than expect her to change her ways in order that she may buy more sugar from us.

At all events, if serious conflicts should arise between the Filipinos and the Chinese, between the Philippines and China, we must remember that as Orientals we believe in the principle that no internal problem and no international conflict can be justly and permanently solved and settled by intimidation and by violence but only through reasonableness and the sense of justice and fairness to all parties concerned.

(ED. NOTE: *This article was first published in the "Philippine Yearbook," however, the Author has made certain renovations.*)