

The Turning-Point Year

In our view, the current year will establish the Philippines definitely as one of the prime goldfields of the world. There are mills now well north of Baguio, others planned for that expanding district, and development preparatory to mills as far as Manceyan. There will soon be a mill in Surigao, that of East Mindanao spoken of last month. Mills working in Masbate will be greatly expanded, and a similar situation will prevail at Paracale, while one group after another expresses much encouragement about a new region in Bicol.

It is hardly thinkable that this mining extensively throughout a district at least 500 miles north and south and branching into remarkable spurs, can fail of commanding more attention in the Philippines and at least some throughout the world. Our mining editor, Ralph Keeler, manager of the Manila Daily Bulletin's office at Baguio, estimates 1936's gold production in the Philippines at 40 million pesos, ₱70 an ounce. Last year's, above ₱32,000,000, was about 10% of America's production and will command world notice to this effect. This year's production will be more advantageous from the news viewpoint, and advertising value: from more mills, more fields, and considerably from the output of new companies.

Two mines only in the Baguio field are greatly developed, under one management, Benguet Consolidated and Balatoc, under Judge John W. Hausermann; and these mines turned out 66% of the Islands' total gold produced last year. Excellent, commendable in management and lucky for every shareholder, the preponderance of Benguet-Balatoc gold in the total production still fosters the doubt that other great mines can not be brought in at Baguio. This is one factor that should be moderated this year. Antamok has already won its spurs, ₱3,013,177 last year, and by the end of the year there should be several more mines among the newer group at Baguio with good output monthly, given the capital at stake, and promise of a sound future in ore well blocked out ahead of mill requirements.

Again, Masbate will certainly loom as a district hardly second to Baguio. It is there that all economic conditions are ideal for mining, and one of the industry's most trustworthy and courageous men, Andrés Soriano, Antamok to his credit at Baguio, is in Masbate to make that district all it ought to be. Another man of the same persistence, Ben Berkenkotter, by no means lost interest in Masbate when he sold the Soriano group Paniqui Mines. In fact, while Masbate Consolidated prepares to make Paniqui's the largest capacity in the Islands, with hardly a lesser eye on its other wonder-property, IXL, many others are prospecting and developing groups of other Masbate claims.

Companies with disappointing histories are settling down to more patient procedure. Some, sensibly, turn to one of the operating companies with capital, resources and experience; and some tighten up the management and continue independently. In the one case and the other, better results are obtained and eager shareholders learn that time is an element in this game. Thus this is also to be a year during which, when men speculate in the shares of new ventures, or ventures already launched but not brought to production of dividends, they will choose the men whom they trust. Heretofore the project has been the first desideratum; it is now beginning to be, the men behind the project.

This in itself will moderate share-gambling, handicap of the industry to date. It will be helped during, let us hope, the year by the government's founding its mining policy. Now, the Commonwealth holds out assurances that mining will be particularly encouraged and that investors will be protected as much as possible from sharp dealing of every sort. No one need think for a moment that Filipinos with funds to risk will stay out of the game because in their first ventures they lost; there will be surplus money from commo-

ditities selling at good prices, the people are venturesome and will try again, this time with fewer cheats to beat them—indeed in a much clearer field.

Here it ought to be noted that despite scandals, never absent from such a situation, mining in the Philippines heads up with as many trustworthy men as mining funds anywhere, if not really more; and the reason is, they get into mining from other fields, whence they bring valued reputations they strive to keep unseathed. This small community is easily combed, and he who complains he can not find good men with whom to risk his funds, in mining, is more given to remorse than to prudence. All this having come out in the wash, and 1935 having marked considerable physical development of various properties not yet to the mill-buying stage yet heading definitely that way, 1936 is to be the turning-point year beyond hazard of doubt.

Were there space left for it, placer would deserve more extensive mention. Last year brought to practical notice placers as far separated as Fred Dorr's old field in Nueva Ecija in central Luzon, to those in southern Mindanao; and placer gold in the Philippines, where every stream boasts colors, is destined, in its comparative place, to trail along with lode. As to ourselves, since placers are many in the Islands that present unique problems engineers from drier climates can not have considered fully, we are watching the building of a bowl-equipment for a Mindanao project; and on this we will, when it proves successful, report to our readers. There should be many placers workable with small capital, that of a few men who could settle down to a long period of good, if not large, income.

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