

United States Government Agencies in the Philippines

Ports and Harbors and Philippine Recovery

By J. GUALBERTO PLANAS

WHETHER the Philippines will be able to resume its pre-war stride in commerce in order to arrive at a speedier national economic recovery depends on the extent of rehabilitation work accomplished on the ports and harbors wrecked by war and damaged by lack of maintenance during the enemy occupation. Unrepaired and inadequately port and harbor facilities incapacitate the resumption of shipping and trade — than which condition, many Filipino statesmen and economists believe, no greater hindrance to Philippine progress exists.

To aid the young Republic in the task of rebuilding and improving port and harbor installations, the American Government, under the terms of the Philippine Rehabilitation Act of 1946, authorized the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake a program of rehabilitation on major Philippine ports. The Manila District Corps of Engineers (MANED) was placed in charge of the program.

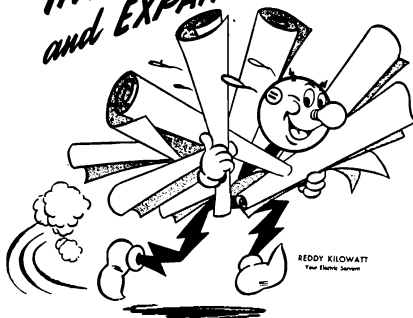
The rehabilitation program was evolved on the basis of a preliminary survey report prepared by Col. C. L. Hall, CE, dated August 20, 1945. Subsequently, MANED made more detailed studies of the ports included in the preliminary surveys and from these developed the Firm Works Program, designed to fit the aim outlined for MANED: that of accomplishing within the limits of the funds available, the rehabilitation of the Port of Manila and 14 other national ports selected by the Philippine Government and of restoring their facilities substantially as they existed before the war. Also included in the program is the acquisition of a dredging plant and other equipment needed for the maintenance of navigable channels and harbor areas.

In addition to the reconstruction work, a training program for 10 Philippine Army and Public Works engineers in the United States has been undertaken by MANED for the purpose of acquainting these technically trained men with the latest methods of locale selection, construction, maintenance, and operation of port and harbor facilities. These men are now in the United States and will return next June after completion of their training and studies.

Accomplishments of the program to date include paving of Manila North and South Harbor streets, an initial breakwater extension at North Harbor, Manila, construction of a gate house on Muelle de San Francisco in Manila, and rehabilitation of the pier at Pulpandan, Negros Occidental. Work on Pakiputan Wharf at Davao was completed on March 16. In addition, rehabilitation of the ports of Cebu, Iloilo, Tabaco, Cagayan, and Iligan are underway. Contracts have been let for work at Zamboanga and Jolo. Reconstruction of Pier 9 in Manila is about half completed, as are repairs to slips and piers and a second extension to the breakwater at North Harbor, Manila.

To equip the Philippine Port Works in the servicing of harbors and channels, the program turned over to the Philippine Government the 700-cubic

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One of the larger projects of the MANED program is the reconstruction of Pier 13. Formerly Pier 7 and a famous landmark, this pier was gutted and severely damaged by bombing. The deck of the pier will be rebuilt and in place of the once spectacularly long single cargo shed, four sheds will be constructed on the rebuilt deck.

Funds for the program come from the general appropriation of \$120,000,000 allocated from time to time by the American Congress in accordance with the terms set forth under Title III of the Philippine Rehabilitation Act. To date, P35,600,000 has been appropriated, of which the sum of P11,200,000 has already been expended in the prosecution of the program.

To supervise the rehabilitation projects all over the country, resident offices have been established by MANED at Manila's North and South Harbors, at Davao, Cebu, and Tabaco (Albay). The Visayan resident office at Cebu City has supervision over the projects at Cebu, Jolo, Zamboanga, Iligan, Cagayan, Iloilo, and Pulupandan. Other resident offices are located at Clark Field, Pampanga, and at Fort McKinley, Manila. The present location of the district office is at Fisher streets and Harrison Avenue, Rizal City. The present district engineer is Lt. Col. W. W. Ragland, CE, who is also the head of the rehabilitation program. He succeeded Col. Clarence Renshaw, former MANED chief, last August, 1948.

When completed in June, 1950, the MANED program is expected to have restored Philippine port and harbor facilities to a condition where service to trade and shipping can be normally maintained. Thereafter, the maintenance and the prosecution of the Philippine Government's pre-war plans on improvement and expansion of Philippine ports and harbors may be resumed to keep up with the expected increase in foreign and domestic trade.

At present, the unrepaired condition of Piers 13, 11, and 7 at Manila South Harbor complicates the problem of berthing cargo ships. Before the war there were 8 berths available for handling cargo; today, there are but 7, while monthly cargo tonnage has increased from 105,000 tons pre-war to as much as the present monthly 190,000 tons. The absence of cargo sheds makes handling this tonnage even more difficult.

Philippine and foreign businessmen are optimistic about the improvement of port and harbor facilities. Reports from firms working on the Manila waterfront show that there has been a marked decrease in pilferage and loss in 1948 over what was sustained the previous post-Liberation years. Officials and businessmen alike believe prospects for better port accommodations and cargo handling will be much brighter when the MANED port and harbor rehabilitation program is completed. With the consequent return of a once flourishing trade and commerce, Philippine economic recovery will have rounded a difficult corner.

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