

# America Can Not Come Back

By VICENTE R. NAVARRO

ADVISING the Filipinos to cooperate with the present régime willingly and not with mental reservation, Commissioner of the Interior Jose P. Laurel, in an extemporaneous speech delivered before a big audience on the City Hall lawn on January 19 declared succinctly and in unmistakable terms that Japan has come to the Philippines not to dominate her but to liberate her from American domination and to establish the co-prosperity sphere in which the small units in the Greater East Asia will co-exist, co-prosper and cooperate with one another under the magnanimous and able guidance of the great Japanese Empire.

Commissioner Laurel spoke in the course of an official visit to the City Hall upon invitation of Mayor Leon G. Guinto. The commissioner was interrupted on several occasions by long applause.

## *Delusion*

"If there are Filipinos who still believe that America will come back", declared Commissioner Laurel with unmistakable assurance, "I will tell you that America will not return and she can not return. And those who are cooperating with reservation had better change their minds and cooperate wholeheartedly, for sooner or later they will be discovered. Cooperate willingly."

The commissioner asserted that even if America should come back, he would advise the Filipinos to cooperate with the Imperial Japanese Forces stationed here so that peace and order could be maintained. "And even if America should return here, which I believe she cannot do," he added, "you would not be the ones to suffer by cooperating with Japan. We would be the ones to suffer, we the members of the Executive Commission and other outstanding leaders. They would pick us out and line us before a firing squad, perhaps in a public plaza, and kill us. But we are ready for that sacrifice. We are ready to be traitors to America, if by doing so, we will be of



service to you, to the Filipino people. That is not oratory. That is determination."

## *Speech Forceful*

The speech of Commissioner Laurel carried a penetrating force which must have convinced even the most obdurate fence-sitters. When he finished, it was said afterwards, he left those with mental reservations debating within themselves as to whether they should cooperate willingly and openly or just appear to be collaborating.

The commissioner of the interior outlined three duties that every Filipino should perform at present. The first of these, he said, is to accept the consummated fact that the American sovereignty over the Philippines has disappeared as a result of the superiority of the Japanese arms.

"Whether you like it or not," he pointed out, "it is already a consummated fact that American sovereignty is no longer here. It has disappeared. Accept it and do not try to be more American than the Americans themselves. It was the duty of America to defend her sovereignty here and when she could not defend that sovereignty, why should we Filipinos defend it? We have done our duty. Thirty thousand young lives, the flower of our youth, were our contribution to the cause of America."

## *Duty of Gratitude*

The second is the duty of gratitude, he said. "That is an oriental virtue," he declared, "which should be planted in the heart of every Filipino." The commissioner averred that through the magnanimity and benevolence of the Imperial Japanese Forces stationed here, the Filipinos enjoy benefits not witnessed in other countries in times of war. He referred to the case of the release of Filipino war prisoners while the war is still in progress.

The third duty of every Filipino, the commissioner said, is for him to cooperate with Japan in the establishment of the Co-Prosperity Sphere in Greater East Asia.

When he came to this third point, Commissioner Laurel explained the significance of the principle of co-prosperity sphere. This principle, he said, means co-existence, co-prosperity, and coöperation.

"Co-existence," the commissioner continued, "means I live, you live, so that both of us live. Japan desires to live, but she also wishes the Philippines to live. What is fundamentally wrong about that?"

Under the co-prosperity sphere, he said, it does not mean for one of its units to live alone, for existence alone does not mean life, but it also means to be co-prosperous with the others. He stated that Japan did not come to the Philippines to get the wealth of the Filipinos.

### ***Must Cooperate***

If Japan and the Philippines are to live under the principle of co-prosperity, the commissioner said, they should coöperate with each other in order, to co-exist and co-prosper.

The Filipinos under the new régime, Commissioner Laurel went on, should engage in three principal ac-

tivities to effect their rejuvenation. These activities are political, economic and cultural.

In the case of the first, the commissioner declared that the Filipinos should eliminate any semblance and vestige of the superficialities of occidental civilization from their country. The Filipinos are Orientals, he said, and should develop oriental culture. Referring to the second activity, he said that the Filipinos should cease as cutters of firewood and carriers of water for the white people.

"The Filipinos," he added, "should not allow the economic exploitation of the Oriental peoples by the white men, and we shall not allow ourselves to be exploited any longer by any occidental."

Speaking of the cultural activity, Commissioner Laurel termed the education of the Filipinos in the past as very faulty. He said that the system of education set up here in the past has never had any mould, with the result that the Philippines has produced a youth that is not of the responsive and responsible type.