

THE PHILIPPINES:

Show Window Of Democracy

By MYRON C. COWEN

U. S. Ambassador to the Philippines

A little more than seven months ago, it was my pleasure and privilege to address a special meeting of Manila Rotary. In that talk I reviewed the cordial and constructive relations which have existed between your people and mine for half a century, relations comprising an outstanding record of mutual devotion to an ideal and mutual good faith.

The world will have to study this record if it is to understand the recent statement of our Secretary of State, Mr. Acheson, when he stressed the very special relationship between our two nations and pledged its continuance. The world will have to do this to realize why the bonds between us are not made up of political, or economic, or military expediency, but are things of the heart and spirit, and therefore stronger than any ties of treaty or compact.

Today, our Filipino friends in Manila will join with many of my fellow Americans in observing an anniversary. To them it is an anniversary of great personal significance. But to me it is even more important as a symbol of the bonds I have in mind.

I have read and I have been told the story of February 3rd, 1945 a dozen times, and still thrill to its incident and its implications. It was on that day that a mere handful of gallant men—800 members of the First Cavalry Division — roared down Manila's roads and retook the Philippines' capital from a numerically greater enemy force. It was an audacious and brilliant military exploit, and the days of battle which followed were grim and terrible; but most moving to me are those little facets of human warmth — few of them recorded — which emerge from the memories of those who survived that trial.

They tell of how your farm folk along the road, oblivious to danger, ran cheering to greet the thundering tanks, lifting their little ones high to wave at one of our grinning Oklahoma farm boys. Of how they pressed their meager stores of fresh food upon our battle weary men, and of how



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those combat-hardened soldiers emptied their pockets and duffle bags of the rations meant to carry them through the unknown days ahead.

They tell how your people opened their hearts and homes to our lonely jungle-fighters, and how those grim soldiers paused in the heat of battle to guide a grandmother to safety or tenderly care for a wounded child.

There were friendships borne in those days, bonds forged and tempered in the fires of war. It is bonds such as those that link the Philippines and America.

Today's anniversary invokes other memories, and they, too, are worth a thought today. It might be timely to pause and remember the state of this nation only five years ago, remember it as it was at the war's end. For three years under Japanese domination no ships had come to your ports except to carry away what was still in your warehouses and what little your paralyzed industries could produce. Then, to this land stripped of its wealth and stripped of its means of producing wealth, came the final devastation of a bitter battle for freedom. When it ended, there was little left save the land itself and the people who lived on it, a brave but starved and weary people.

Remembering those days, let us look about us now. How can we fail to

feel a great surge of pride and confidence; pride in this nation's achievement and confidence in its future? How can we fail to realize that the problems and obstacles it faces today, while serious, are equally possible of successful solution?

I, for one, have had, and continue to have, fullest confidence in this nation's potentialities as a major factor in the ideological development of the Far East.

Recently in the press, I have seen the thought expressed that the Philippines might become the "show window of democracy" in this part of the world. I like that phrase if it is properly used and understood — if it does not imply that democracy is a commodity, like pianos and ice boxes, that can be purchased in pesos or dollars.

Just what do I mean by a "show window of democracy?"

The people of Asia, in their march toward progress and development, stand today at a fork in the road. To the right is the way of life which you and I have known, a way best described and charted by the four freedoms. To the left is the way of life offered by communism, a way leading only to the ruthless glorification of the state, denying every right of the individual to freedom, dignity and self expression. But where the way to the left is shown by vague and evasive signpost, only hinting at a possibility of a better life, our way can be marked by a very real and tangible example of how millions of men and women are faring as they travel the road to the right. Where one is symbolized by an "iron curtain", the other can afford the "show-window."

The greatest service, therefore, that the Filipino people can render the peoples of Asia and the cause of world democracy lies in their own development as prosperous and happy citizens of the democratic world, able to stand proudly before the closest and most critical world scrutiny. In this, they may be sure of the encouragement and aid of all other citizens of democracy.

You may ask, How will this exciting program affect you here in Iloilo? But it seems to me that it would be more

accurate to ask how Iloilo will affect the program. For I see here all the elements out of which that program will be designed, and I see a pattern already emerging which may well set the pace for the rest of the nation.

The future of this nation's economy envisions development of its power resources, development of industrial facilities for processing and manufacture. But, as was the experience of America, that future economy can be achieved and maintained only upon the sound base of the strong agricultural economy you develop today. The means of achieving your objective lie in the wealth of your soil and your forests and your people. The speed with which you achieve it is limited only by the efficiency and vigor with which you use those natural resources.

It is natural for an American residing in Manila as I do, to think at once of sugar whenever he hears the word Iloilo. And it is difficult to think of Philippine sugar without entertaining feelings of hopefulness aroused by recent accomplishments, together with a sobering sense that much remains to be done. The vigor with which the people of this province have pushed the rehabilitation of the sugar industry and the measure of success they have achieved justify hopefulness. The sobering sense that many things remain to be done is inherent in the fact that Philippine sugar, after 1954, will have increasingly to meet competition from sugar produced in other areas. Now I am not a sugar-producer and am not competent to say what these things may be: I came with the supposition that selection of more productive types of cane, soil analyses designed to disclose what types of fertilizers are needed, improvements in the methods of processing and better labor-management practices may supply part of the answer. Possibly some cane areas may be better planted to other crops; possibly more emphasis will be placed on development of by-product industries. But as I say, I am not a sugar-man and I come hoping to learn from you some of the answers rather than in any thought that I personally can supply them.

One thing I do know, however. You are an independent people, free to conduct your own search for the answers to your problems and to apply those solutions which best suit your national interests and well-being. That is the way it is, but that is not the way it might have been. Less than six years ago this province, like others of the Philippines, was in the hands of imperialistic invaders. They did not control the hills, where hardy and brave men and women continued to resist them, but their heel bore heavy on the people of the cities

and municipalities and their transport equipment rolled on the highways. But for those in the hills, their helpers in the towns and on the farms, and the aid of allies who fought their way back to help bring liberation, the Philippines today would be a colony of Japan. It would be the Japanese who would tell you what to plant and what not to plant; it would be the Japanese who would decide how much you should receive for your crops and what you should be permitted to buy in return.

But today you of the Philippines are free, as I said, to seek your own solutions to your own problems. We may be able to furnish technical experts and assistance in other ways but the responsibility for decisions, and for the hard work needed to give effect to these decisions, will be your own. I hope that your decisions, whether in Government or in sugar-development, may be based on considerations of the long-term public good rather than short-term, selfish interests or personal profits. The nation's economic well-being and its continued independence depend upon it.

I believe it to be true that independence may be won only by working and fighting and can be preserved only by working and fighting — fighting against selfishness and misgovernment, which are the enemies within, no less than against an actual invader should he land on a country's shores. If Government is clean, honest and concerned for the public good; if employers plan intelligently to supply the public's needs and treat with labor on a basis of fairness and equality; and if labor behaves in sober realization that its interests are inseparable from those of employers, a nation can stand strong in its unity. If not, it faces the danger of being overthrown. The threat of Japanese imperialism has been laid, but there exists in the world today another imperialism which stands ready to take advantage of those who do not cherish their independence sufficiently to work for it, to sacrifice their own immediate interests for it, and if necessary to fight for it. I for one believes in Philippine independence, and I pray that you may win success in your endeavors to protect it for yourselves and for your children.

Fortunately, it seems that the productivity of Iloilo is not confined to sugar. You also produce statesmen. I refer particularly to your native son and my very good friend, Vice-president Lopez who is respected and beloved not only here in his home town, but throughout the nation. We have long known and greatly admired the marvelous job he did as Mayor of this city during the year following liberation and his unflinching stand for honesty in Government. More recently he expressed a

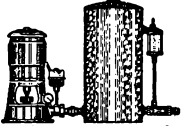
political truth which the history of my own nation has demonstrated time and again. He displayed a keen understanding and appreciation of basic democracy when he declared that the two party system was a source of unity rather than division, for an articulate and constructive opposition is to a political system what a conscience is to an individual.

I have good reason to believe that the eyes of the world will turn with increasing interest toward the Republic of the Philippines as time goes on, and there is good reason to hope that the world will like what it sees in this "show window of democracy." And there is reason to believe that the eyes of the Philippines will turn more and more toward Iloilo as time goes on — and should certainly like what it sees here in this friendly city and province whose gracious welcome and cordial hospitality I shall never forget.

(Address before Iloilo Rotary Club, Feb. 3, 1950)


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