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*In the valley of decision*

## Our Political Parties

by **Claro M. Recto**

**F**OR MANY YEARS the nation has stood on artificial props. We have allowed alien and beguiling forces to chart for our people a course that does not lead to the realization of their legitimate aspirations. We have been made to fear new ideas, to abhor independence of thought and action, to shun examples, precedents and experiences of other peoples that have attained their goals. We have been basking in the feeling that all is well with us and all good things will come to us under the protection of powerful friends. So we have come of age with frail limbs and

a lethargic mind, unable to stand on our own feet or to think for ourselves, light-hearted and complacent in an attitude of dependency, with our most vital problems, such as national security and survival and economic reconstruction, left in the hands of a guardian who has to look after his own more numerous and perplexing problems.

The onrush of world events has reached such mighty proportions that we can not but be shaken from our lassitude. The change in the balance of world forces which has ended myths of impregnability to nuclear devasta-

tion among the super-powers, has made us realize that, after all, we will still have to fend for ourselves for our survival. Every conscious nation that has a mission to accomplish and a destiny to fulfill is doing it. Peoples on whom we have hitherto wasted hardly a shred of sympathy and attention, are marching with firm determination on the same trail which the industrial nations of the West had to blaze to reach the summit of wealth and power. Self-help and self-reliance are the order of the day. It is time that we pondered and took stock of our situation, bearing in mind George Washington's wise and prudent counsel in his political testament—his Farewell Address—that "it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another," because "it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character."

**T**HE impact of our revolution against Spain on other Asian dependencies was formidable and there was a time when we were looked up to as the pioneers of freedom in colonial Asia. But that was only for a short while. Today we are only camp-followers of the mighty movement that is sweeping the under-developed countries of the world. But, sad to say, nationalism which is the soul of that movement and a na-

tional dogma in Asia and Africa is still being challenged in our midst by the pharisees and prophets of the colonial-agricultural economy. And, what is worse, men of little faith and unrepentant prodigal sons and foolish virgins of our own race, richly deserving the gospel's appellation of "a generation of vipers," indulge in the suppression of the teachings of Rizal which indoctrinated our people in patriotism, civic consciousness and national dignity at the supreme sacrifice of his noble life.

A nation's political, economic and cultural life is of its people's own making. Of course there are what we call the forces of history but it is for the people, in the present advanced state of civilization, to channel them toward the realization of national objectives. We must accept, therefore, full responsibility for the backward condition of our economy, our political immaturity and pompousness, our opportunistic mentality, our predilection for dramatizing minor issues to the neglect of long-range basic questions, and for our confusions and indecisions that have delayed for decades the progress of the nation.

One of the most influential factors in the shaping of a nation's life is its political system as developed by its political parties. I shall, therefore, comment as brief-

ly as possible, on the manner they have conducted the affairs of the nation, political and economic, during the first three-score years of this century, and the impact of their actions on our mentality.

**I**T IS TO BE deplored that our major political parties were born and nurtured before we had attained the status of a free democracy. The result was that they have come to be caricatures of their foreign model with its known characteristics—patronage division of spoils, political bossism, partisan treatment of vital national issues. I say caricatures because of their chronic shortsightedness respecting those ultimate objectives the attainment of which was essential to a true and lasting national independence. All over the period of American colonization they allowed themselves to become more and more the tools of colonial rule and less the interpreters of the people's will and ideals. Through their complacency the new colonizer was able to fashion, in exchange for sufferance of oratorical complaints for independence and for patronage, rank and sinecure, a regime of his own choosing for his own and in his own self-interest.

**T**O ANSWER the question as to why the Americans embarked upon the conquest of the Philip-

pines is to define the role that our political parties actually played, or were allowed to play, before the attainment of independence.

Shortly after the War of Secession the United States saw the rise of corporations and the obliteration of the so-called American frontier. Her industrial capitalism expanded rapidly with the result that her domestic market became alarmingly insufficient for her mounting manufactures and farm produce. When in the 1890's she was gripped by a major economic crisis, her leaders in trade and finance thought that the best way to solve it and avert new ones was to expand her economic frontiers. The new thinking was summarized by Senator Beveridge in 1892, in the following words:

"American factories are making more than the American people can use; American soil is producing more than they can consume. Fate has written our policy for us; the trade of the world must, and shall be ours."

It was during this period, too, that the Western powers were "cutting the Chinese melon" by establishing their respective enclaves and spheres of influence in that huge prospective market. Having joined the scramble for China late, and not possessing any enclave on Chinese soil the United States announced her

Open Door policy to preserve—that was the stated purpose—Chinese territorial integrity and secure equal trade opportunity. But America was not a Pacific power like Britain, Japan, Russia, France, and Germany, and to compensate for this disadvantage she sought to establish nearby a springboard to the China mainland. The Philippines was found to be the ideal springboard.

The evolution of American thinking, which inevitably led to the Spanish-American war and the conquest of the Philippines, may be readily perceived in the following quotations. Theodore Search, President of the National Association of Manufacturers, as early as 1897 said:

"Many of our manufactures have outgrown or are outgrowing their home markets and the expansion of our foreign trade is their only promise of relief."

He was followed by the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, Frank A. Vanderlip, who said in 1888:

"Together with the Islands of the Japanese Empire, since the acquirement of Formosa, the Philippines are the pickets of the Pacific, standing guard at the entrances to trade with the millions of China and Korea, French Indochina, the Malay Peninsula, and the islands of Indonesia to the south."

On January 4, 1900, Senator

Beveridge, in sponsoring a Joint Congressional Resolution (S. R. 53) spoke in this guise:

"The Philippines are ours forever . . . and just beyond the Philippines are China's illimitable markets. We will not retreat from either, we will not repudiate our duty in the archipelago, we will not abandon our opportunity in the Orient. . . . Our largest trade, henceforth must be with Asia. The Pacific is our ocean. More and more Europe will manufacture the most it needs, secure from its colonies the most it consumes. Where shall we turn for consumers of our surplus? Geography answers the question. China is our national customer . . . the Philippines give us a base at the door of all the East."

In the light of these pronouncements it is not difficult to see in retrospect what Admiral Dewey was really doing in Hongkong in the last stages of the Philippine revolution against Spain, and how the sentimental fiction came to be woven that America could not bear to see us, orphans of the Pacific after the end of the Spanish rule, swallowed up by the Germans, English and Japanese who were waiting for the opportunity to fall upon a priceless booty.

It was President McKinley and the American Senate who explicitly announced America's purpose in taking forcible possession of

the Philippines in 1898, indirectly but plainly revealing the reason for the presence of Dewey's fleet in Hongkong long before the outbreak of the Spanish-American war. McKinley said:

"There is nothing left for us to do but to take them (the Philippines) all and to educate them all, uplift and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could for them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died."

According to McKinley himself, when he made that fateful decision he was on his knees before the Almighty in search for divine guidance, and that, right thereafter, and I quote, "I went to bed, and went to sleep, and slept soundly . . ."

The unbelieving *Christian Advocate* of New York, in its issue of January 22, 1903, commented irreverently:

"It seems probable that McKinley confused the voice of the people with the voice of God, for he touched upon almost every string in the familiar harmony of imperialism."

As for the American Senate, that body merely supplemented the presidential statement with the adoption of the so-called Emery Resolution, by adding the following, in the indicated order of priority:

"And to make such disposition of said Islands as will best pro-

mote the interests of the citizens of the United States and the inhabitants of said Islands."

Our attitude towards our erstwhile conquerors, incurably biased in favor of everything that comes from them, must have been based on this mystical belief in the "providential" origin of our historic relations. Since nothing lasting can be built on such a delusion, we must, in order to enable ourselves to evolve the rightful policies for our country in the future, start ridding our minds of out-dated superstitions.

**T**HE ARMED FORCES of the First Philippine Republic were still fighting fiercely, though disorganized and poorly equipped, against those of the mighty new conqueror, when some wealthy and conservative members of the Filipino community, aided and abetted by the first Civil Governor of these Islands, W. H. Taft, later President and, still later, Chief Justice of the United States, decided to organize a political party. It was called the *Partido Federal* designed to cooperate, as its immediate purpose, with the American military authorities in the task of coercing and cajoling the people into accepting American rule. Its platform, which had Governor Taft's blessings, decried further resistance and advocated as its final goal a statehood in the American Union. Patronage was

promptly awarded to the new party by the colonial Administration and, in consequence, its leaders were exclusively chosen for the juiciest and choicest positions in the government. Don Cayetano Arellano and Don Victorino Mapa, the two greatest Filipino jurists of the time, and Don Florentino Torres, were appointed Chief Justice and Associate Justices, respectively, of the first Philippine Supreme Court. The great scholar Pardo de Tavera, together with Benito Legarda and Jose Luzurriaga became members of the Philippine Commission which was headed by Taft himself. Other prominent *Federales* were appointed Judges of First Instance, public prosecutors and bureau directors.

**T**O INSURE the supremacy of the Federal Party, liquidate the remnants of the resistance movement, discourage all independence propaganda, and stabilize the new regime, several expedients were resorted to: 1) monopoly of patronage for those affiliated with the Federal Party; 2) enactment of the Sedition Law (Act No. 292, November 4, 1901), which made it a criminal offense "for any person to *advocate the independence or separation from the United States, whether by peaceful or other means, or to publish pamphlets advocating such independence or separa-*

*tion*"; and 3) approval of the Act of Brigandage or "Ley de Bandolerismo" (Act No. 518, November 12, 1902) under the provisions of which any person could be sentenced to death, to life or from 25 to 30 years imprisonment, for stealing a carabao if it could be proved, even by circumstantial evidence, that the accused was a member of an armed band organized for the purpose of stealing carabaos or other personal property, without the need of establishing that he actually participated in the robbery but only that he was a member of the band.

It is well to remember that under this Act, within a period of ten years only, hundreds of Filipinos who remained in the mountains in opposition to the American regime were sent to the gallows, or imprisoned for life or for 30 or 25 years. These were General Macario Sakay and his fellow officers and their men, and hundreds of others. Separate criminal informations were filed against them in the various courts of first instance of the country, and in all of them the different judgments of conviction were affirmed unanimously by our own Supreme Court.

With reference to the Sedition Act it made impossible for Filipino nationalists to organize themselves into political groups advocating independence, until after

the middle of April, 1906 when the Act was repealed. It was for this reason that the Nacionalista Party could not be organized before 1907.

Those were the years, according to a Filipino historian and political writer, of "suppressed nationalism."

**P**OLITICAL patronage, a characteristic of the American party system, was established forthwith by Taft himself under a policy of this tenor:

"In the appointment of natives, the fact that the man is a member of the Federal Party is a good recommendation for him for appointment for the reason that we regard the Federal Party as one of the great elements in bringing about pacification, and if a man is in the Federal Party, it is fairly good evidence that he is interested in the government we are establishing and would do as well as he could."

This frank, forthright statement presents the principal characteristic of the new colonization policy, which was to establish a government with a semblance of Filipino representation through trusted Filipino agents enjoying the respect of the people because of their social position or intellectual reputation. For, in a country with such limited economic opportunities, men of intelligence and ambition had to look up to the gov-

ernment to further their personal advancement. Government appointments, carrying handsome emoluments and distinction, were adequate rewards for acquiescence, loyalty and cooperation.

From 1901 to 1907 the Federal Party was the only one legally in existence. Not only was it the party in power; it was *the* party. It won, as was to be expected, all local elections prior to 1907. Its leaders, however, did not know how to make the most of the spoils system to strengthen the party. Doctor Pardo de Tavera, the head, was a great man and a highly educated Filipino, but he was not a politician. From the point of view of party politics and its connotations his direction of the Federal Party was a failure.

**W**ITH THE popular sentiment fast crystallizing with a new note of urgency for self-government and independence, the abandonment of the statehood plan of the *Federales*, a plan which was openly discouraged by influential members of the American Congress, and the repeal of the Sedition Act in 1906, the Filipino nationalists saw the opportunity for organizing themselves into a political group, and took full advantage of it. Thus the Nacionalista Party, which later made history, and a very brilliant one, came into existence. This was early in 1907.

The first encounter between *Nacionalistas* and *Federales* in the same year, to elect *diputados* to the First Philippine Assembly, resulted in a sweeping victory for the *Nacionalistas*. This made it manifest that the Filipinos were unqualifiedly ready for independence, and that in the face of such an overwhelming popular sentiment even patronage and official pressure counted for nothing at the polls. The American administrators, practical politicians that they were, thought correctly that if they were to accomplish their colonial objectives, they would need the support of the triumphant political group. Such support they could secure only by entrusting to that group the distribution of government jobs and allowing its leaders freedom in their advocacy of independence, in exchange no doubt for the group's cooperation in the execution of the essential policies of the colonial power. Taft, then Secretary of War proclaimed the Speaker of the Philippine Assembly the No. 2 official of the Philippine Government, a rank second only to that of the American Governor-General. From that time the partnership between the representative of the new sovereign and the Filipino leader operated smoothly as pre-arranged.

Professor Dapen Liang rightly commented:

"During the later years of the

Forbes administration legislation became largely a matter of private arrangement between the Governor-General and the Speaker."

Forbes was succeeded by Harrison, and what follows is the appraisal made by an American writer of that period, D. R. Williams, of the relations between the American Governor-General and the leader of the "Filipino participation in the government:

"During the Harrison administration, this (control of the patronage) lay with the *Nacionalistas*," whose chiefs "dictated appointments from auxiliary justices of the peace to Supreme Court justice."

The death knell tolled for the *Federales* and it was a "red letter day," if I may use the expression, for the *Nacionalista* leaders. There was general jubilation. But how long was it to last?

**B**ECAUSE THE broad colonial policies for the Philippines were pre-determined and formulated in Washington, the limited authority given to the Filipino participation found expression mainly in the distribution of patronage and in the constant jockeying for positions of rank and distinction.

Political patronage on the scale and in the strictly partisan manner it was being administered, and the lack of autonomy of

provinces and municipalities in the administration of local affairs, particularly in the matter of raising their own revenues, placed these administrative units completely at the mercy of the central government. Their growing needs, especially permanent improvements like markets, schools, barrio roads, made inevitable the continuous grants of aid by central government to the local governments which practically made the latter veritable fiefs of the former, with the controller of the party patronage as the feudal lord, whose will had to be obeyed in all matters of party business by the local chieftains under pain of political liquidation. In such circumstances no opposition party could survive. In reality true party system became known in this country only since 1946 with the birth of the Liberal Party, a splinter of the Nacionalista, motivated by a purely personal rivalry between two Nacionalista leaders in the struggle for the Presidency.

But on top of the party in power was the American colonial administrator, the prime source of government patronage, who could at will continue to dispense it or could withdraw with its implied commitment to accommodate the administration in the attainment of the latter's own colonial objectives. The Nacionalistas were

so aware of the political implications of the situation that they could not afford to displease the colonial power and alienate its good will. It would have meant the loss of their political paramountcy. They needed each other and, therefore, acted as was expected. Oratorical clamor for independence continued to thunder deafeningly and patronage kept on being distributed abundantly while economic policies were silently but surely chaining the nation to the oars of the colonial galley.

With the government as the main employer and with economic conditions as backward as those of any other agricultural-colonial country, the efforts of the people to insure their livelihood were principally directed to securing government jobs. The limitation of opportunities outside the official world made centralization inevitable and the government omnipotent. This was the corrupting influence which impelled the astute and the ambitious to use politics as an instrument for personal advancement in the social, official and economic spheres. Patronage and centralization became, therefore, the twin products of that peculiar colonial situation which seemed to fit the designs and wishes of both parties.

**B**UT THE gravest sin of Philippine politicking was the gross neglect to exert efforts towards economic emancipation. So obsessed were the politicians with their power struggles and the doling out of the spoils of office that, either they did not foresee, or having foreseen, they completely neglected the economic problems of independence. Politics, with its enlivened election campaigns and its dispensation of patronage, became a national sport which distracted and amused the people, in the same manner that bread and circuses distracted and amused the Roman populace, which did not mind whether it was Nero or Cincinnatus, or Caligula or Marcus Aurelius, who was their Caesar. In our case while the more fortunate of us were living in comfort and luxury with the fat proceeds of our privileged agricultural exports and the holding of high government positions, the nation was slowly being consigned to perpetual economic slavery.

Had our leaders been from the beginning more far-sighted, and had they prepared the people for the responsibilities of independence, in the same manner that a true Christian is trained to stand ready at every hour for his final accounting because death comes as a thief in the night, our sovereignty and independence would now be real and complete

and on the other hand, our leaders would not have exposed themselves to the charge that they did not sincerely desire independence that their outcries and agitations for it were just intended for political effect, and that their sole aim was to win and retain the monopoly of power with its accompanying privileges.

**U**NDER ARTICLE IV of the Treaty of Paris Spanish ships and goods were admitted to Philippine ports on the same terms as ships and goods of the United States for a ten-year period. Consequently no preferential arrangement between American goods and Philippine products could be established then without violating that Treaty or necessarily extending the same privilege to imported commodities from Spain. Moreover, the establishment of preferential rates for the Philippines at the time would have proved embarrassing to the Americans who were bidding for equal treatment in the China market.

When the 10-year period ended the United States approved without loss of time the Tariff Act (Payne-Aldrich) of 1909 establishing a limited free trade with the Philippines. This allowed the entry of American goods on a preferential basis and geared Philippine agricultural production to the American market. Such was

the situation until certain Philippine agricultural products came to be a serious menace to powerful vested interests in the United States, which prompted her, at the irresistible behest of those interests, to terminate, in form if not in substance, the colonial relationship between the two countries. Thus, the hour for Philippine independence struck when, according to a distinguished American historian, already "the wiser Filipino leaders had ceased to desire it."

**N**O MORE dispassionate and correct analysis of the motivations behind the so-called "grant" of independence to the Philippines could have been made than the one by Dr. Julius W. Pratt, Professor of American History of the University of Buffalo. From his book, "America's Colonial Experiment," I offer to this select audience the following excerpts:

"No chapter in the history of American policy towards its possessions was marked by such glaring contradictions and inconsistencies as that relating to the Philippines. Although political policy pointed steadily toward self-government and eventual independence, economic policy has steadily built up the Philippines as a source of raw materials for the American market and created an economy dependent upon conti-

nued free access to that market. (p. 291)

"The Independence Act of 1934, then and since adverted to the world as an exemplary deed of renunciation, found probably 90 per cent of its motivation in a cynical desire of American producers close to the American market to the Filipinos at whatever cost to the latter. Independence was granted when the wiser Filipino leaders had ceased to desire it and upon terms almost certain to produce economic disaster in the Philippines. (p. 291)

"As early as 1924 one writer had noted that independence for the Philippines was advocated by certain groups in the United States engaged in the production of beet and cane sugar, tobacco, and vegetable oils of the competition with their products of duty-free commodities from the Philippines. (pp. 301-302)

"Of special interest, in view of the economic motives of the legislation were its trade provisions. These were hardly generous. Throughout the transition period American products would continue to be admitted free of duty to the Philippines. Philippine imports into the United States, on the other hand, would be subjected to progressive restrictions. (p. 306)

"All in all, the economic outlook for an independent Philippines was gloomy enough. Cer-

tain features of the act were glaringly unfair. The time allowed for economic readjustment was too short. The free market guarantee to American products in the Philippines to the end of the transition period would postpone till independence any opportunity for the Philippines to make reciprocal trade arrangements with other countries. (p. 307)

"The United States was the first modern power to grant independence voluntarily to a rich colonial possession. American public men have frequently pointed to the act as one of generosity and statesmanship, which other colonial powers would do well to copy. It is unpleasant to have to record that the law thrusting independence upon the Philippines showed little statesmanship and no generosity. It sacrificed the well-being of the Philippines for the supposed benefit of American farmers and workers, disguising the injury with the kiss of independence. It was, of course, within the power of Congress to restrict or tax Philippine imports and yet to refuse independence. But it is no valid defense of an ungenerous act to say that a still more ungenerous one was possible." (p. 310)

**O**UR FREE TRADE with the United States precluded the establishment of local industries, and, by channeling our farming

activities towards a few selective export products, we prevented ourselves from diversifying our production and from attaining greater economic flexibility, growth and stability, while our domestic consumption continued to increase far beyond our capacity to supply. As Philippine economy became more dependent on the American market and manufactures and our people became more accustomed to American products, the struggle against free trade became increasingly hopeless to a point where it had to be abandoned altogether. The result was the sorry spectacle of confused leaders now debating on whether we can afford to be independent or not, now pleading for the extension of free trade after independence, in mortal fear of losing tariff preferences for our export products and of having to dispense with consumer goods to which we have been so accustomed and which we could not produce. Those leaders, who had taken upon themselves the task of carrying to a successful conclusion the fight for freedom which our heroes and martyrs began in 1896, have sadly mistaken, so it seems, the shadow and vanity of personal power for the substance and honor of a true national independence.

**S**O GRIEVOUS a mistake, amounting to official dereliction, on

the part of our leaders, can best be illustrated by an analysis of the platforms of the major political parties which have dominated the national scene the turn of the century.

The Nacionalista platform of 1907 contained no economic program at all. What follows, which is one of its planks, cannot be considered as having any economic connotation from the point of view of our discussion:

"Our people are thoroughly adaptable to democratic institutions and have men with sufficient wisdom and intelligence to organize a stable government, and wealth and natural resources to maintain an *economical public service*, the more so when it is hoped that under their own law, the material conditions of the islands will develop and increase satisfactorily for the benefit of the Filipinos."

The platform adopted by the two Nacionalista factions in 1921 dealt with generalities and made no mention of any economic plans. When the two factions reunited in 1924, the platform they adopted also failed to make reference to economic policies or programs essential to independence. It was apparent that our leaders had already come to accept limited free trade with its anti-industrialization connotation as the correct pattern of our eco-

nomic relations with the United States even after independence.

THERE WERE, however, political elements which saw the necessity of preparing the country for the economic responsibilities of independence, and of granting autonomy to provincial and local governments to release them from the domination of the central government and thus encourage the formation of opposition parties and insure free elections.

At the height of the Speaker's supremacy as national leader, a group of Nacionalistas led by General Sandiko seceded from the party to form a new group, the *Partido Democrata Nacional*. It was launched in April, 1914 with a platform advocating industrialization, markets for Philippine products, and protection to national commerce, trade and agriculture. But in the national elections which followed, the new party was overwhelmingly defeated. The people were still unconcerned with economic problems; patronage and pork barrel were still the favored securities in the political stock-market.

Sumulong's *Progresistas* joined the *Democratas* and a new group was born in August, 1917: the *Partido Democrata*. This party advocated autonomy for local governments, promotion of agriculture, commerce and industry and development of our natural re-

sources. It, too, was disastrously defeated by the all-powerful party in power. The people remained apathetic towards the economic future of the nation; to all appearances pork barrel and patronage were still the only things that mattered to them.

Our masses continued to suffer from their age-old poverty, but the well-entrenched plutocracy and the politically-minded and active American-educated minority enjoyed a measure of colonial prosperity. The latter's indifferent attitude toward economic nationalism helped the party in power in defeating Don Juan Sumulong's attempts (1914-1934) to bring to the political forum a frontal discussion of our economic problems.

Our political historians have dismissed with a few derogatory remarks such movements as the *Sakdal* in Southern Luzon in 1935. It was a mistake. The case for the *Sakdals* could not have been regarded as a mere temporary aberration, for the membership of that party was numerous enough and loyal enough to elect in 1934—in the only province, Laguna, which was the seat of its organization—the provincial governor, the two representatives to the Legislature and the majority of the local officials. But people who rise up in arms under the banner of independence and economic emancipation do not risk

their lives simply because some silver-tongued rabble-rouser tells them to. What may have impelled them to take up arms could be the sincere belief that their poverty and lack of opportunities would be remedied only if the Philippines were politically and economically free. They became skeptical of peaceful solutions. For while our political leaders were orating on independence the mainstream of mass consciousness was being directed toward liberation from total economic bondage: the bondage of a feudal-agricultural structure which had been keeping them impoverished, and the bondage of foreign over-all control of our economy, which gave them no hope of improving their means of livelihood. Vice-Governor Hayden, who was here during the *Sakdal* uprising in 1935, described them as "hard-working, family-loving people who exemplified the fine basic qualities that are typical among the Filipino masses . . . they were desperately worried about earning a living for their women and children and genuinely concerned over the welfare of their country . . ."

Not all, therefore, were apathetic, or, as *Filosofo Tasio* in Rizal's *Noli* would say: *No todos dormian en la noche de nuestros abuelos.*

**J**UST BEFORE the outbreak of the Second World War our leaders realized the deleterious effects of continued economic dependence on the United States, and they recoiled in horror, but, strangely enough, the only solution they thought possible was the continuance of preferential trade agreements over a period of readjustment. It was a solution that merely complicated and aggravated the problem. It only postponed the impending disaster. Years of dealing with petty matters, of squabbling over the spoils of office and of big talk while picking crumbs from the American table, had so sapped the strength and courage and so dimmed the vision of our leaders that they became incapable of opening a new path which would lead the nation to real political freedom through economic emancipation from alien control.

The sterility of pre-war political thinking on economic problems is reflected in the Nacionalista platform of 1935 which advocated a revision of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, "so that preferential trade with America may be allowed to continue after independence and shall not be terminated until the expiration of such period as may be considered reasonably necessary to permit the Philippines to make a proper adjustment of her economy." This was the result of the prevailing

political and economic fallacies of the time namely: that the special relations between the Philippines and the United States were mutually beneficial, that the Philippines could not live and survive without America, and that somehow American benevolence would prolong the so-called adjustment period indefinitely.

The war years and the rigors of enemy occupation gave us an opportunity to reassess our needs and our capabilities as well as our policies, to bring out the best in our own initiative, and to strengthen the national character. Many realized for the first time in those trying days that we could stand on our own feet if we only exerted the necessary effort, and make a fresh start on a more independent basis, politically and economically, after the war was over.

**B**UT THE popularity of G.I. Joe, his jeeps, his cigarettes and his candy bars, the early handouts of canned goods and used clothing, rekindled within us the dying embers of old colonial beliefs. Flushed with the excitement of MacArthur's dramatic return, the people did not detect beneath the surface of magnanimity the same old imperialistic policies at work slipping round our necks once more the leash of economic control. The new party in power, a chip off the old Na-

cionalista, whose leadership could have set this country on the right road to economic independence, chose to accept, on the very eve of the nation's independence, a reimposition of the colonial economic control.

Its new-found devise was the Bell Trade Act and its twin-sister legislation, the War Damage Act, which made payments dependent on our acceptance of the former, particularly its iniquitous "parity right" clause. The new imperialists, led by a ruthless American High Commissioner, used the poverty and devastation brought upon us by their war as a lever to get what they wanted. Inheritor of a pre-war political tradition of reliance on the United States with a blind faith in her benevolence and sense of altruism, the new post-liberation leader, thinking no doubt of the needs of his own administration, quickly capitulated. His new party accepted the Bell Trade Act and amended the Philippine Constitution granting parity rights to Americans in the enjoyment of our natural resources, and bartering future economic stability and the nation's natural resources for short-term gains and temporary accommodations. The pitiful and shameful surrender of our patrimonial, political and economic rights was almost complete. We became the only losers in the war we had just helped to win. It was a sad ex-

perience in Philippine-American relations.

PERHAPS BECAUSE it was temporarily out of power and therefore had the leisure and was at a better distance to view the national problems in a clearer perspective, the Nacionalistas offered to the electorate in 1949 a platform that expressed some recognition of the country's need for industrialization, for developing our power resources and for attaining other economic objectives. But the election in that year was the most cynical piece of fraud ever perpetrated in the history of our democratic experiment and the Nacionalistas were defeated.

In the Nacionalista platform of 1953 I succeeded in incorporating, with the help of Justice Barrera, Senator Locsin, Councilor Barredo and other nationalistic Nacionalistas the following planks:

"Readjust the character of our economy from its present predominantly colonial-agricultural status to a progressively industrial system, thus removing unemployment and accelerating the attainment of economic independence and sound national prosperity.

"Remove present limitations on our economic freedom of action contained in existing executive agreements and trade agreements under the Bell Trade Act."

For the first time in our political history a major party came out with an unequivocal statement for an industrial economy against an agricultural economy and continued foreign economic dependence and control.

The victory of the Nacionalistas in 1953 was unprecedented, but because their standard-bearer himself, as it turned out, did not believe in his newly-chosen party's nationalistic platform, the Nacionalista goal of economic emancipation through industrialization suffered, ironically, a resounding defeat. The new President, ill-advised by his foreign advisers, tried to maintain our agricultural economy, reviving the pre-war myth that we are essentially agricultural and that we cannot hope to industrialize. Instead of abrogating the parity rights in the Voltairean spirit of *ecrasez l'infame*, or at least of limiting their field of application, the same administration expanded them, through the Laurel-Langley Agreement, to all other forms of business ventures or enterprises.

IT WAS at that period of our political history which saw my break with certain leaders of the Nacionalista Party. It was not motivated by personal considerations. It was purely a matter of principle: whether we should continue our agricultural-colonial status, or industrialize in order

to achieve real, true independence, and whether we should formulate an independent foreign policy and act accordingly, or continue to be retainers of the State Department. It was, in fine, a break between the growing legions of nationalism and the well-entrenched forces of colonialism.

I took pains to explain the issue of nationalism to our people in the 1957 Presidential campaign and, although I lost, I sincerely believe that the task of bringing to the attention of my countrymen the need for a nationalistic orientation in our political and economic life, which my fellow-crusaders and I have set for ourselves, has borne fruits beyond our expectations.

We should all feel gratified that the present administration has decided to follow the nationalist planks of the Nacionalista platform which the Nacionalista standard-bearer in 1953 discarded so disdainfully. The present administration, by its advocacy of the Filipino First policy and its acceptance, at least in principle, of the need for real industrialization, has at last come to grips with the true vital issues in this period of our national existence. Of course, one may say quite candidly, that nothing more than a modest beginning has been made; in fact, on some aspects of nationalist policy, notably industrialization, the Administration

has acted in a curiously half-hearted manner, as if it were not yet fully certain of the course it must take, or as if there were powerful extraneous forces working on it. The Administration should show, I suggest, greater vigor and determination now that it has started to move in the right direction.

The problem of corruption still plagues the government. It can not be helped. How much of this should be ascribed to the present Administration is anybody's guess. But if we are fair, we must admit that there was a tremendous backlog of it that has been received from previous administrations. The Opposition party which, for all the oratorical protestations of its titular head, is still basically anti-nationalist, has tried to make graft and corruption an overpowering political issue despite its own questionable record, little realizing that it is colonialism that has been mainly responsible for this cancer that is gnawing at the entrails of our body politic. But with power-politics still as a primary concern of our political parties there can be no permanent cure for graft and corruption. Only industrialization and eventual economic emancipation will provide our people not only with economic security and well-being but a greater latitude of economic opportunities which will minimize the influence of

government patronage and allow merit to become the yardstick for employment and promotion.

**T**ODAY THE nationalist struggle is far from won. There are elements in both parties that seek to perpetuate colonial rule. Alien economic interests are trying hard to oppose and to sabotage the movement. Some enemies of nationalism are fighting it frontally. Others, masquerading as nationalists, are boring from within, acting as fronts for powerful foreign interests, or seeking to emasculate its meaning by trying to limit its operation to our cultural life alone so that the nation's economic exploitation by aliens may continue undisturbed behind a pleasant facade of cultural relationship.

But these anti-nationalists must realize that their hours are numbered, that everywhere there are unmistakable signs that the people are experiencing a reawakening of the nationalistic faith which animated and gave meaning and substance to the lives of their forefathers, and of a growing awareness and understanding of the vital importance of reshaping our policies with a view to freeing them from alien control, so that, after our economy shall have passed into Filipino hands, this and future generations may at long last come into the full fruition of their heritage.

If the party in power is courageous and loyal to its goals and the people are steadfast and determined, we shall be able to eradicate once and for all from our national politics the dual role of serving God and Mammon at the same time which our political parties have been playing since their inception, with such disastrous results for the nation.

After fourteen years of independence it is certainly time we developed a political leadership whose sole allegiance is to the people, whose sole concern is the welfare of that people, and whose

sole desire is an unquestioned obedience to the people's will. After fourteen years of independence surely there could be no earthly reason why our political parties should still allow themselves, wittingly or unwittingly, to be used as instruments of colonial rule. Our people must demand undivided allegiance from the men they have chosen to govern this country. And they must be vigilant and profess loyalty only to the leadership that best expresses their will and only for so long as such leadership continues to express and obey that will.

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### Verdict

**A** NEW YORK ATTORNEY made such a bombastic closing argument that the jury seemed overwhelmed by his sheer volume. As the reverberations died away, his opponent rose.

"Listening to the thunderous appeals of my learned friend," he began, "I recalled an old fable. A lion and an ass agreed to slay the beasts of the field and divide the spoils. The ass was to go into the thicket and bray to frighten the animals out, while the lion was to lie in wait and kill the fugitive as they emerged. In the darkest part of the jungle, the ass lifted his awful voice and brayed and brayed.

"The ass was intoxicated with his own uproar, and wanted to see what the lion thought of it. With a light heart, he went back and found the lion looking about doubtfully.

"What do you think of that?" said the exultant ass. "Do you think scared 'em?"

"Scared 'em?" repeated the lion in an agitated tone. "Why, you'd 'a scared me if didn't know you were a jackass!"

The jury's verdict went to the quiet lawyer.