

Chapter Six

The Filipino Colonial State, 1902–1946

"POLITICS" AND THE PHILIPPINE ASSEMBLY

Nineteenth-century Spanish officials and *ilustrados* who thought about the problems of the Philippines thought about the state. The new twentieth-century governors, set on proving the superiority of American rule, thought about democracy. To be sure, these officials built state agencies for revenue generation, peace and order, health, education, and day-to-day administration of the colony. They also controlled them tightly, especially the Bureau of Education, which they considered central to the goal of creating a unified citizenry.

But equally important to this colonial regime was the speedy establishment of representative institutions from the municipal to the national level. The crucial element was "representation," a political norm at the core of American constitutional politics. In early twentieth-century America, "genuine representation" was thought to reside at the state, not federal, level. It was expressed through political parties that competed for seats in the U.S. Congress, where legislators deliberated national affairs and controlled the nation's purse strings. The institutions of purely national power—the presidency, federal armed forces, and federal bureaucracy, for example—had far less institutional strength than Congress or even the courts. Political parties fought hard to keep that power based in Congress, where it was deployed through patronage and appropriations; the Progressive movement tried to strengthen central state agencies and tame the party "machines." Their struggle was ongoing; both sides won victories and suffered defeats.

Many of the men sent to govern the Philippines were men "of courts and parties," a political orientation found in both major parties.¹ William Howard

Taft, the first governor-general, was a Republican judge from an Ohio political dynasty, and his successor, Luke E. Wright, was a Democrat, corporate lawyer, and former attorney general of Tennessee. President McKinley's instructions to the Philippine Commission in 1900 reflected the localist temperament: "In the distribution of powers . . . the presumption is always to be in favor of the smaller subdivision" (see box 6.1). As David Barrows, first director of the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes and a Progressive, later wrote, "The American Commissioners had in view the American country as a model, and were impressed with the evils of 'centralization' and 'autocracy.'"²

A representative system was therefore built from the local level up. Municipal elections began in pacified areas in December 1901, followed by the Philippines' first polls for provincial governors in February 1902. It was an extremely restricted electorate of municipal elites that participated, but this was a crucial step in "the linking of municipal and provincial politics." For the latter now "had to look to the municipalities to obtain support for political positions" rather than rely on the central government for direction.³ By mid-1903, 1,035 municipal governments and 31 provincial governments had been created. These led to the next phase of colonial consolidation—the 1907 election of representatives to the Philippine Assembly. Filipino elites quickly grasped the potential of this system, which reversed the Spanish effort to gather power at the center. To win a local, provincial, or assembly seat, an aspirant first deployed his local network of family, friends, and business associates. Party affiliation was also necessary, and as the Nacionalistas had quickly consolidated the ideological upper hand, membership in this party often ensured electoral victory. Finally, politically ambitious men sought the backing of an American *padrino* (patron), who could shepherd a favored client into the Philippine Assembly and introduce him to politicians from other provinces and American officials in the capital.

Some of this was familiar from the Spanish period, when a friar's blessing and *principalia* kin would help to win a *gobernadorcillo* seat. But at that time the process led no further, and the Filipinos were merely "puppets on the stage performing according a script" written by the friars.⁴ The new regime introduced a political ladder to climb, making more politics worthwhile. In the Assembly, a politician gained power over the distribution of resources; at home, his network protected his local turf and served as trusted lieutenants: "brothers, uncles and cousins for the senior posts, and nephews for the junior ones."⁵ The focus of state building therefore moved from the institutionalist concerns of the Malolos Congress to "politics"—the battle to capture the machinery of representation.

Box 6.1. “The Opportunity to Manage Their Own Local Affairs”

Excerpts from President William McKinley’s instructions to the Taft Commission, April 7, 1900

“As long as the insurrection continues the military arm must necessarily be supreme. But there is no reason why steps should not be taken from time to time to inaugurate governments essentially popular in their form as fast as territory is held and controlled by our troops. . . .

“You will instruct the [new] Commission to proceed to the city of Manila, where they will make their principal office. . . . Without hampering them by too specific instructions, they should in general be enjoined, after making themselves familiar with the conditions and needs of the country, to devote their attention in the first instance to the establishment of municipal governments, in which the natives of the islands, both in the cities and in the rural communities, shall be afforded the opportunity to manage their own local affairs to the fullest extent of which they are capable, and subject to the least degree of supervision and control which a careful study of their capacities and observations of the workings of native control show to be consistent with the maintenance of law, order, and loyalty.

“The next subject in order of importance should be the organization of government in the larger administrative divisions corresponding to counties, departments, or provinces, in which the common interests of many or several municipalities falling within the same tribal lines, or the same natural geographical limits, may best be subserved by a common administration. . . .

“In the distribution of powers among the governments organized by the Commission, the presumption is always to be in favor of the smaller subdivision, so that all the powers which can properly be exercised by the municipal shall be vested in that government, and all the powers of a more general character which can be exercised by the departmental government shall be vested in that government, and so that . . . the central government . . . following the example of the distribution of powers between the States and the National Government of the United States, shall have no direct administration except of matters of purely general concern, and shall have only such supervision and control over local governments as may be necessary to secure and enforce faithful and efficient administration by local officers. . . .

“In all the forms of government and administrative provisions which they are authorized to prescribe, the Commission should bear in mind that the government which they are establishing is designed not for our satisfaction, or for the expression of our theoretical views, but for the happiness, peace, and prosperity of the people of the Philippine Islands, and the measures should be made to conform to their customs, their habits, and even their prejudices, to the fullest extent consistent with the accomplishment of the indispensable requisites of just and effective government.

“At the same time, the Commission should bear in mind, and the people of the Islands should be made plainly to understand, that there are certain great principles of government which have been made the basis of our governmental system which we deem essential to the rule of law and the maintenance of individual freedom, and of which they have, unfortunately, been denied the experience possessed by us; that there are also certain practical rules of government which we have found to be essential to the preservation of these great principles of liberty and law, and that these

principles and these rules of government must be established and maintained in their islands for the sake of their liberty and happiness however much they may conflict with the customs or laws or procedures with which they are familiar.”

—William H. McKinley, “Instructions to the Taft Commission through the Secretary of War,” United States War Department, April 7, 1900, in *Annual Report of the War Department* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909)

The Philippine Assembly—the central arena for locally based power—was important to state building in several ways. Historian Bonifacio Salamanca calls it “the matrix from which real Philippine autonomy evolved”:

In the halls of the Manila ayuntamiento [city hall], where the Assembly’s sessions were held, the members of the Filipino elite met face to face, probably for the first time, to deliberate freely on matters affecting the Philippines. As such, the Assembly was a useful instrument of political socialization, and, therefore, of nation building.⁶

Outside the Assembly, the socializing continued. Anderson observes that the legislators “went to the same receptions, attended the same churches, lived in the same residential areas, shopped in the same fashionable streets, had affairs with each other’s wives, and arranged marriages between each other’s children. They were for the first time forming a self-conscious *ruling class*.⁷ This formation of a “national elite” out of the gathered local power-holders was another step in the realization of “the Philippines” as it is today.

The careers of the two most powerful politicians of the American period, Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmeña, illustrate the shift from institutionalism to “politics.” Quezon, from Tayabas province south of Manila, rose quickly from petty provincial bureaucrat in a small municipality to provincial governor. His own indomitable qualities were largely to thank (see box 6.2), but his friendship with American constabulary chief Harry Bandholtz set him on the path, playing a crucial role in his election as Tayabas representative to the Philippine Assembly.⁸

Sergio Osmeña was born to a prominent family in Cebu City. This origin and his education “provided him with the credentials for membership within the rather select group of *ilustrados* in Cebu” and allowed him to establish connections with prominent Americans and Filipinos there and in Manila. In 1904, Osmeña was appointed acting governor of Cebu province, and in 1906 he won election to the post with endorsements from Governor-General Cameron Forbes and ex-governor Taft. After consolidating his provincial network, Osmeña established alliances with “several like-minded fellow governors” to take control of the vital governors’ convention. He then joined

Box 6.2. The Qualities of Manuel Quezon

"[He] was ingratiating and charismatic, a brilliant orator and a consummate politician. He was audacious, resourceful, unencumbered by integrity, and capable of shrewdly using his political strength to mold public opinion. His assessments of those with whom he dealt were unerring. He manipulated where he could—Filipinos and Americans alike—and used the electoral process to bludgeon those Filipinos who challenged him. He equated political opposition with enmity and was ruthless in dealing with influential Filipinos who were loyal to rival leaders or to abstract ideas that incurred his ire. These qualities were moderated only by the transfer to himself of the loyalty of Filipinos buffeted by his combativeness or their withdrawal from the arena of insular politics. . . . The speed with which Quezon mastered congressional procedures, the promptness with which he acquired proficiency in English, and the sure political sense evident in his ready assimilation to congressional culture were remarkable accomplishments."

—Frank Golay, *Face of Empire: United States–Philippine Relations, 1898–1946* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 166

the Partido Nacionalista and won election to the Philippine Assembly. Once in the legislature, Osmeña and Quezon teamed up to lead the Nacionalistas.⁹ Osmeña was elected speaker and Quezon majority floor leader.

The two men were not content to dominate party and Assembly, however, as long as key agencies remained in the firm grasp of the Americans. Barrows noted that, the "evils of centralization" notwithstanding,

ostensibly autonomous . . . [local] governments were never entrusted with important branches of the service or utilized by the insular authorities as local agents. Education, constabulary, forests, mines, lands and posts were committed to the insular bureaus with headquarters in Manila and representatives in all parts of the islands.¹⁰

The tax system was also centralized, meaning that revenues flowed in the direction of the Manila-based insular treasury. This allocation became institutionalized, with Manila receiving up to 65 percent of the revenues and the provincial and municipal treasuries sharing the remaining portion.¹¹ Once they understood that "the Assembly had been plastered onto a viable government," Filipino politicians concluded that "seizing power in that government by burrowing from within was more promising than . . . radically changing it through the legislative process."¹² And so they began to expand the power of the legislature by encroaching on the power of the executive. Within a few months of the Assembly's opening session, Filipino politicians were pushing the limits of American patience—passing laws beneficial to their own interests, investigating the colonial budget, and criticizing policies of the

Philippine Commission, the executive body headed by the governor-general that was now a de facto upper house.¹³

In their early skirmishes, the Commission prevailed, as Taft used his veto power to override self-serving laws, defend executive appointments, and limit legislative spending. The Filipinos' relative inexperience also hampered them. But for every defeat, they learned a lesson. By the time Forbes became governor-general in 1909, Quezon and Osmeña were adept at combining legislative attack with "the game of favors and political back-scratching"—a game deeply familiar to their American mentors.¹⁴

The next step was to get a foot in the door of the executive office. Osmeña continued to strategize from the halls of the Assembly, while the more astute Quezon accepted the Assembly's nomination to be resident commissioner for the Philippines in the United States House of Representatives. In Washington, D.C., Quezon would lobby for both Philippine interests and his own with the congressmen who had decisive control over the future of Philippine affairs.

FILIPINIZATION**Tammany Hall in Manila**

On the national level, the U.S. Republican and Democratic parties differed in their Philippine policies largely on the question of time: How long would close supervision continue, and when would full self-government be granted? Republicans, whose presidents McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft administered the first decade of colonial rule, expected the process to be one of long duration (at least two generations in the case of the special provinces). Democrats wanted self-government to occur sooner. Woodrow Wilson's victory in the 1912 presidential election gave the Democratic party the chance to substitute its own vision.

In late 1912, Quezon returned to Manila with the new governor-general, Francis Burton Harrison, a New York Tammany Hall politician whose task was to implement the "Filipinization" of the colonial state. Quezon had lobbied hard for Harrison's appointment and was not disappointed. Upon taking office, Harrison immediately set the stage for a substantial shift in colonial personnel and power. One of his first orders was to curtail American executive power, especially in the oversight of provincial and local governments. To minimize opposition from American bureaucrats, he encouraged many to resign by cutting executive salaries.¹⁵ Harrison then broadened Filipino power, giving the Nacionalistas a free hand in determining local and provincial appointments. He raised no objection when the Assembly claimed the right to compel executive officials to testify and submit documents. Nor did

he oppose the Assembly's appropriation of the right to determine budgetary allocations.¹⁶

Harrison ended a decade of parallel state building in the Moro and Mountain provinces, implementing the transfer of authority from the U.S. Army to civilian Filipino officials. This effectively quashed the separatist intentions brewing in southern Mindanao, forcing Muslim datus, deprived of their American patrons, to seek accommodation with Filipino politicians. Quezon and Osmeña reciprocated by welcoming them into the Philippine Assembly, although executive power was vested in the newly created, Filipino-controlled Department of Mindanao and Sulu. Henceforth, Muslim elites became part of the political hierarchy, political brokers mediating between their communities and the Filipino colonial state. This inaugurated a long period of stability in the Muslim south.¹⁷ In the Cordilleras, "highlanders" who received their initial education and training under the Americans readily formed a bloc in support of Filipinization.¹⁸

The impact of Harrison's policies on the colonial bureaucracy was swift. When he took office in 1913, "there were 2,623 Americans in the insular service, with 147 of them in major positions (assistant bureau chief or higher, judges, provincial governors, or lieutenant governors) . . . [while] there were only 859 Filipinos in insular service holding high office, and 1,080 in classified services." By 1919, "only 58 Americans were left holding higher offices and 702 in classified services (half of these were teachers). The proportion of Americans in the colonial state was reduced from 29 to 6 percent, with those in senior positions dropping from one-seventh to one-twentieth." Correspondingly, Filipinos in insular service holding high office numbered 6,363 and those in classified services had reached 12,047.¹⁹

In 1916, the U.S. Congress gave its stamp of approval to Filipinization with the Philippine Autonomy Act, commonly known as the Jones Law, which "placed in the hands of the people of the Philippines as large a control of their domestic affairs as can be given them." The law abolished the Philippine Commission and passed on its remaining legislative functions to the upper house of the new bicameral legislature.²⁰ Harrison then created the Council of State "to harmonize the executive and legislative departments."²¹ The American governor-general's power was diminished by the mandate that all executive bureaus (except Public Instruction) be headed by Filipinos and that these agencies assist the legislature in crafting laws. Filipinos now had equal say in all aspects of policy making, budget preparation, and defining the functions of departments. Under this "hybrid Commission-Assembly government," the Nacionalistas dominated both houses of the legislature. Osmeña remained in the lower house, while Quezon became president of the new

Senate.²² Harrison declared, "It will now never be so . . . for an executive to ride ruthlessly over the people he is sent here to govern, without due regard for their sentiments and due consideration of their wishes."²³

Crony Capitalism circa the 1920s

While the legislature had its share of members representing landed interests from the late Spanish era, the majority were upwardly mobile men from relatively humble backgrounds. With their control of the colonial state vastly expanded, these leaders began to use it as an instrument of "primitive accumulation." There were two sources of largesse. First was the state itself. Through the "spoils" system, Filipino politicians distributed offices (and their corresponding budgetary allocations) to relatives and supporters. Political appointment of kin, allies, and cronies became standard practice, with entry into government assured by the backing of a powerful politician. In exchange, an appointee facilitated the business success of his patron and protected other members of his network within the bureaucracy.

The other path to material enrichment was the extension of the spoils system into the economy. Here the vehicles were state corporations established to promote colonial economic development. The Philippine National Bank (PNB), for example, created by the Assembly to finance sugar production and exportation, was taken over by Sergio Osmeña "in violation of every principle which prudence, intelligence and even honesty could dictate."²⁴ Osmeña used appointments to the PNB's offices to repay political debts, without regard for appointees' knowledge of the sugar industry or bank management. Almost immediately, the media began reporting on corruption inside the bank, and investigations revealed that Osmeña's appointees "authorized extravagant loans to companies in which they were themselves investors . . . [or] to finance personal consumption, instead of production or commerce."²⁵ The irregularities were so blatant that one Osmeña protégé, General Venancio Concepcion, was eventually jailed; even his patron could not help him.

Manuel Quezon controlled the Manila Railroad Company (MRC) and likewise used that state corporation as a source of employment for supporters in Manila and in the provinces reached by the company's lines. But Quezon never thoroughly "politicized" the MRC for his own benefit. To fill key management positions, Quezon hired professionals, most notably Jose N. Paez, the MRC's general manager. An engineer trained at the Swiss Federal University and New York's Cornell University, Paez represented a "new group of Filipino officials" who wanted to "establish a merit-based and non-political

service in the islands." Paez ran the MRC up to the eve of World War II, making it one of the most successful state corporations of the colonial era.²⁶

Combining corruption and competence would become a pattern among state leaders. Even Osmeña was not solely concerned with self-enrichment. Outside the PNB, he was described as an "achievement-oriented public official" who "built a track record as a 'modern,' 'rational' official replete with achievements in such areas as urban planning, fiscal management, public health, peace and order, and bureaucratic reform."²⁷ How does one account for this combination of achievement-oriented professionalism with abuse of the spoils system? Scholars of Philippine history and politics have not explored this question, understandably drawn to the abundant evidence of perfidy and dishonesty among Filipino leaders. But we find a tentative explanation in the regime of colonial accountability. While they certainly felt entitled to the spoils of office, Filipino officials were also compelled to prove their competence in order to move toward self-government. As the future leaders of the state, too, they wanted something left standing, if only so the robbery could continue. Thus Quezon hired a professional to run the MRC even as he turned the railway into his personal fiefdom, and Osmeña could be described as "the Philippines' first political technocrat."²⁸

But accountability to the American executive was limited, both by the Jones Law and by the politics of nationalism. Osmeña disarmed American critics of the PNB scandal by labeling them "anti-Filipino" and used nationalism to justify putting Filipinos (his supporters) into leadership positions. Peter Stanley notes, "The centrality of the independence issue and the standing challenge of American control focused Filipinos' energies upon politics and made even the elementary pursuit of profit and gain a political act." Personal aggrandizement thus became synonymous with national interest, individual ambition with a sense of history: "Hence the paradox that the use of the bank to develop and sustain the economy through the elite appeared an economic means to a political end, self-determination, while control of the bank's credit policy through the majority party was in fact, for some, a political means to an economic end, personal profit."²⁹

American officials were not the only critics of the dominant party. A prominent Visayan congressman, Vicente Sotto, was a vocal and relentless detractor of the hypocrisy of the Nacionalista leadership, especially on the issue of independence (see box 6.3). But Sotto "remained an individual voice" and "essentially powerless." Even when oppositionists united around the Democrata party, they gained no traction, becoming merely "a kind of ineffectual 'third party' to the bipolar competition between the Quezon and Osmeña factions of the Nacionalista Party."³⁰

Box 6.3. Vicente Sotto, Congressman, Second District of Cebu, 1922–1925

"Both in and outside Congress, [Vicente Sotto] was one of the most vocal critics of the 'independence missions' to the United States that Quezon and Osmeña dispatched almost yearly from 1919 to 1934. He criticized it as a waste of the people's money and as not worth its annual appropriation of one million pesos. . . . On 3 September 1923, together with representatives Claro M. Recto of Batangas and Alfonso Mendoza of Manila, Sotto asked Speaker Manuel Roxas to allow them to examine disbursements from the independence fund. When they were ignored by Roxas, they appealed to Governor-General Leonard Wood to order the Insular Auditor to examine the accounts of the Independence Commission. When Wood demurred, saying that unless charges of fraud were preferred he could not allow examination of the books, the Democratas staged a rally . . . where speeches were delivered charging that the Nacionalistas were squandering the independence funds and diverting them for personal and electoral purposes. They followed this up . . . with a mandamus petition with the Supreme Court to compel the opening of the books of account. The Supreme Court denied the petition. . . . Sotto charged Osmeña and Quezon with foisting a 'deception' on the Filipino people with their self-interested manipulation of the independence issue. He charged that the Nacionalista leaders were exploiting the issue to perpetuate themselves in power; that while Osmeña and Quezon were fiery in their independence demands at home, they were submissive and compliant in Washington; and that, in truth Osmeña and Quezon had no effective plan for the independence campaign but were handling it with an eye for how they could advance their political fortunes at home."

—Resil B. Mojares, *Vicente Sotto, the Maverick Senator* (Cebu City: Cebuano Studies Center, 1992), 90–92

Restraining "Politics"

As we will see in succeeding chapters, active opposition from social forces with a stake in a society's development can often mitigate the plunder of state resources. In the colonial Philippines, the American business community might have been one such social force. Its location in strategic sectors of the colonial economy—power, telecommunications, and export agriculture—and its anti-Filipino sentiment qualified it to serve as a deterrent to crony capitalism.³¹ But this sector was weakened by several factors. The U.S. Congress had limited land ownership by American enterprises to 1,000 hectares (approximately 2,500 acres) at the behest of domestic agriculture. When the Assembly later moved to block non-Filipino access to public land and vital economic activities such as interisland shipping, the American business community lacked the position from which to oppose it.³²

With the exception of Standard Oil and the California Packing Company, many of these businesses had weak linkages with the American mainland.

Moreover, the opposition of U.S. sugar and tobacco interests prevented Philippine products from gaining further access to the American market. The Philippine Tariff Act of 1902 "provided only a 25 percent reduction in the tariff on goods coming from the Philippines—much lower than the 75 percent reduction which administrators in the Philippines called for." Anticorporate agitation by the Anti-Imperialist League, Americans' sense that the Philippines was "too far away . . . to make investment profitable," the greater attraction of the China market, and impending self-rule kept American business interest in the Philippines weak.³³ This left most of the Philippine economy in Filipino hands, notably those of the landed elite in agriculture and crony capitalists in the emergent industrial and service sectors.

American officials did not always surrender to the "politicization" of the colonial state. When Republican Warren Harding was elected president, he appointed Leonard Wood, former military governor of the Moro province, as governor-general (1921–1926). Wood tried to reassert executive power by trimming bloated budgets, rejecting political appointees, and vetoing legislation blatantly designed to benefit Filipino politicians. Wood, who was popular with the Muslims, also tried to reverse policies of the Harrison administration by transferring jurisdiction of Muslim areas to executive agencies still under American control, appointing American provincial officers to replace Filipinos, and assuring Muslims that Philippine independence was still far in the future. The latter, sensing a change in the political wind, endorsed these moves enthusiastically.³⁴ (See box 6.4.) Wood, in short, tried to strengthen the capacity of the central state, inspired by Progressive advances in empowering the U.S. federal government against local states and parties.³⁵

Quezon and Osmeña fought Wood just as the two primary American political parties fought the Progressives. The two Philippine leaders ordered all Nacionalistas to resign their membership of executive agencies, refused to pass bills sponsored by Wood, and attempted to override bills he vetoed. They cut budget allocations to the governor-general's favorite projects, rejected his cabinet appointees, and accused him of abusing his executive power. Wood also became a useful symbol of the "anti-Filipino" American. His Filipino allies, who, according to one, supported him "in spite of his ideological position with respect to Philippine independence, because he was an honest and impartial administrator, aloof from local party politics, and had a sincere and zealous concern for good government," were damaged politically by association with him.³⁶ But Wood prevailed in these skirmishes because he had the support of the Republican administration in Washington, much as Spanish liberals could briefly impose reforms in the nineteenth century. The battle ended abruptly, however, when Wood died during a surgical procedure on August 7, 1926. His was the last attempt by American

Box 6.4. Muslims and the Colonial State: Transformations

1902: Datu

"[Datu Piang] is very shrewd, has brains and is self-made, being now quite wealthy and a power in the valley, he controls all of Dato Ali's influence over the [non-Muslim] tribes and adds to this his own brain. He is the only prominent Moro who seems to appreciate what the American invasion means and the business opportunities it brings with it. The Chinese blood in him makes him a shrewd businessman, and he has accumulated quite a fortune and is daily adding to it. He practically controls all the business of Cotabato, especially exports, through his own Chinese agents in that place; has complete control of the Moro productions; and working with the Chinese merchants makes it practically impossible for a white firm to enter into business in the Rio Grande [Pulangi River valley], even with much capital behind them."

—U.S. Army report, quoted in Jeremy Beckett, "The Defiant and the Compliant," in *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, ed.

Alfred W. McCoy and Ed C. de Jesus (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982), 401

1926: Embattled

"The American Army officers who governed us then were good men and just. They gave us assurance that they would protect us and not turn us over to those whom we do not trust. Whether these officers had the power to make those promises we do not know. But we trusted them. . . . But year after year, slowly, they have given the Christian Filipinos more power over us. Their laws are too complicated for us; the Moros need a simple government. Our own is more simple, ours are laws that have been handed down from father to son for many centuries. My sons have told me [about] one of the bills presented to Congress by Mr. Bacon of New York. They tell me that this is to separate Mindanao [and] Sulu from the rest of the Philippines. That would be better. Perhaps not the best solution but better than present conditions. Our hearts are heavy just now."

—"Interview with Datu Piang of Dulawan, 1926," Joseph Ralston Hayden Papers, University of Michigan, Box 28-24

1931: Compromising

"I am reminded of a story about the Moros told me by Director Hidrosollo himself. The Director accompanied some Americans to Mindanao and on one occasion the Moro chieftains in their usual oratorical fashion told the Americans that they did not want the Christian Filipinos to rule them, and that they wanted the Americans to remain there. Later on when one of those Moro chiefs realized that Director Hidrosollo was there, he invited the Director to a private corner. When they were out of hearing of the Americans, the Moro datu said, 'Well, Director, don't mind what we said in our speeches. They are for American consumption. The real thing is that we are brothers. Christian Filipinos and Moros are of the same blood and race. So don't believe what I told them.' The Moros are unfortunately forced by circumstances to play this kind of politics."

—Maximo Manguiat Kalaw, "The Moro Bugaboo," *Philippine Social Review* (1931): 73–74

(continued)

1935: Integrating

"We do not like to be called 'Moros' because when we are called 'Moros' we feel we are not considered as part of the Filipino people. You also know that the name 'Moro' was given to us by the Spaniards because the Morocco had been under the rule of Spain [sic] like Mindanao and Sulu. So that I would like to request the members of this Convention that we prefer to be called 'Mohammedan Filipinos' and not 'Moros' because if we are called Moros we will be considered as enemies, for the name 'Moro' was given to us by the Spaniards because they failed to penetrate into the island of Mindanao."

—Aluya Alonto, "Speech of Aluya Alonto on the Problem of Mindanao (interpreted from Moro to English by Datu Marigan Saramain Alonto), in *Proceedings of the Philippine Constitutional Convention, 1934–1935* (Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1935), 420

colonial officials to slow down Filipinization. His successors lost interest in strengthening the American-controlled executive once Washington decided to grant the Philippines independence.³⁷

Amid their battles with American governors, Quezon and Osmeña fought each other for control of the legislature and the Nacionalistas—in other words, for eventual control of the state. One of their many skirmishes after government reorganization under the Jones Law involved Osmeña's proposal for a "quasi-parliamentary government." Osmeña wanted to serve as secretary of the interior while keeping his position as speaker of the Assembly. Holding both positions, he would "be in a strategic position to both encroach upon the American executive and withstand challenges from Filipino rivals." His strategy failed when Quezon, recognizing a maneuver to subordinate his role as Senate leader, refused to support the proposal. Here the question of institutional reform, always subject to political interests, was raised solely to pursue individual short-term advantage.

Quezon's favorite way to thwart Osmeña was to criticize him publicly for monopolizing power, offer to resign as Senate president, and orchestrate his own allies' rejection of his resignation. Quezon would reluctantly heed their pleas for the greater good.³⁸ Another tactic was to send Osmeña to Washington to negotiate with American presidents and congressional leaders over the terms of independence. In 1922, Quezon went a step further: He accused Osmeña of "authoritarianism" and split the Nacionalistas, creating his own Collectivista party for the upcoming elections.³⁹ His new, short-lived party won, but Quezon again worked closely with Osmeña against Wood's reassertion of executive prerogative. In this case, it was party structures that were subordinated to short-term political interest.

After Wood was gone, Filipino political leaders lobbied Washington to hasten self-government and Washington responded in March 1934 with the Tydings-McDuffie Act, also known as the Philippine Independence Act, which approved the creation of a transitional, ten-year Commonwealth of the Philippines, with independence scheduled for 1946, and a constitutional convention to prepare for both.⁴⁰ The act, together with a peasant uprising in provinces north of Manila, put an end to Nacionalista infighting, as Quezon and Osmeña reunited to control the drafting of the constitution. In the resulting 1935 Commonwealth Constitution, the existing executive-legislative configuration was retained, with a single-chamber National Assembly and a popularly elected president and vice president.

Popular Insurgency

The Nacionalistas claimed that their government was "of the people," but in reality, they paid little attention to landlessness, wages, and other problems of the rural and urban poor in the first two decades of colonial rule. The suffrage—limited to propertied and English- or Spanish-educated men—was widened in 1916 to include men literate in native languages, but the property qualification still excluded most rural Filipinos, who lived in conditions of economic and political dependence. "The people" were useful to threaten the Americans with demonstrations calling for immediate independence—a popular desire—but there was no need to mobilize the populace for elections. This changed when the 1935 Commonwealth Constitution removed property qualifications and a plebiscite two years later confirmed female suffrage. Literacy remained a qualification in this period, excluding about half the adult population.⁴¹ But those who qualified for the suffrage were highly likely to register and vote. Filipinos now had *de facto* control of the colonial state, and independence was around the corner. Suddenly, "the people's" concerns became more prominent.

Before the Nacionalistas or other parties had considered how to cultivate a "mass base," insurgencies from below commanded the attention of the national elite. The second and third decades of colonial rule were punctuated by small millenarian movements led by "popes" promising to end landlord rule and deliver independence and rural prosperity. In northeastern Mindanao, Western Visayas, and central Luzon, such groups declared that the "time was at hand," attacked constabulary troops, and were easily repulsed.⁴² The frequency and spread of these rural revolts worried the Americans, and their concern turned to alarm when new "secular movements" began to appear among the urban and rural poor, assisted by veterans of the Philippine Revolution and the Philippine–American War.

The surge in popular protest in the 1920s and 1930s was due as much to the inadequacy of the evolving state as to the poverty of the countryside and cities. According to David Sturtevant:

Filipinization produced a political system directed by indigenous leaders, but failed to provide practical methods for contesting or transforming the landed elite's conventional economic values. . . . Mass education created literacy rates and aspiration levels well beyond the range normally associated with colonial milieus, but neglected to supply adequate routes for upward mobility. More disturbing still was the demographic outcome of efficient public-health programs. Between 1903 and 1939, the archipelago's population soared from seven to approximately sixteen million. Productivity and diversification, unfortunately, did not keep pace.⁴³

To these were added the effects of the Great Depression, which "produced additional disequilibriums conducive to the generation of strident protest movements."⁴⁴

In the 1930s, one movement most alarmed American and Filipino authorities because its organization spanned rural and urban areas. A disgruntled Quezon adherent, Benigno Ramos, built up a network of supporters in Manila and nearby provinces through his newspaper, *Sakdal* ("To accuse"), leading to the establishment of the Partido Sakdalista on October 29, 1933. The appeal of the Sakdalistas lay in their criticism of the Nacionalistas' "maladministration," combined with a comprehensive rural and urban political program. In contrast to the ten-year transitional commonwealth, the Sakdalistas demanded "complete and absolute independence." They called for the abolition of taxes; "equal or common" ownership of land; investigation of remaining friar estates and Church wealth accumulated "through dishonest means"; the formation of a Philippine army; the use of local languages in public schools; lawyers for poor defendants; lower pay for officials and increased pay for laborers, teachers, and policemen; and the "adoption of voting machines to prevent election frauds." Most disturbingly, they pierced the Nacionalistas' ideological armor, accusing them of being satisfied with American rule and insincere in their commitment to independence.⁴⁵

The party's program attracted a variety of people—from peasants suffering onerous tenancy agreements and urban workers with low wages to urban and rural voters aggrieved by Nacionalista corruption and betrayed by its compromises with the United States. In the 1934 general election, the Sakdal party scored impressively: three seats in the House of Representatives, including one from Quezon's own province; the Marinduque subprovincial governorship; and municipal offices in Laguna, Bulacan,

Nueva Ecija, Rizal, and Cavite provinces. Most of these provinces surrounded Manila, where popular antipathy toward Quezon and his party was high. Colonial officials worried that the Sakdalistas' "Philippine-style populism" would coalesce with that of the fledgling Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (Communist Party of the Philippines, or PKP), which had been established in 1930. The Communist cadres of the PKP were proving effective recruiters among the urban proletariat in Manila, organizing trade unions and drawing workers from the Nacionalista-controlled unions.⁴⁶ The opportunity to disarm this threat came when the Sakdalists started to debate strategy—should the tiny number of Sakdal lawmakers participate in the politics of compromise in the legislature (where they wouldn't have much impact) or should the party turn to more militant action? The latter option was already attracting more peasant recruits and changing what Sturtevant calls "a bourgeois challenge to the *Nacionalista* oligarchy into a rampant patriotism of the millennial variety."⁴⁷

Municipal officials began to restrict Sakdal political meetings in the provinces through police harassment, arrest, and denial of the right to assemble. The party responded with rallies and protests and rumors that "Independence will appear magically like the burst of a sunrise." On May 2, 1935, Sakdalistas engaged constabulary units in armed confrontation in several towns around Manila. The battles were all one-sided: Sakdalistas armed only with "clubs, bolos [machetes], sickles, daggers, rusting pistols and home-made guns" were no match for the rifles of the well-trained constabulary. By May 4, the uprising was over. More than a dozen Sakdalistas were killed or wounded, and hundreds were sentenced to prison terms of two to seventeen years. The provincial backbone of the party was broken. Ramos, who was in Japan at the time seeking international support, could only watch helplessly as his 68,000-strong party collapsed. (See box 6.5.)

In late 1935, elections for the commonwealth president, vice president, and National Assembly were held. The national electorate—largely untouched by Sakdal propaganda or organizing—had been alarmed by the revolt, a reaction that inspired the Nacionalista slogan "Quezon or Chaos." Numerous small parties and oppositionists united around aging revolutionary Emilio Aguinaldo, but he was more a symbol than a relevant politician. The Nacionalista party machine was vastly superior to its opponents, and 68 percent of Filipino voters chose Manuel Quezon for president. Conservative nationalism won this particular skirmish, although it confirmed the problem of disunity between the poor majority of the Filipino people and their compromising elite. With the advent of mass suffrage, it also posed a new question—elections or mass action?

Box 6.5. Excerpts from an Interview with Sakdal Leader Salud "Generala" Algabre

I. Her Early Life

Where and when were you born?

In Cabuyao, October 10, 1894.

What were your parents' occupations?

My mother was a seamstress. Father was a landowner. He managed extensive lands.

How extensive?

There were five warehouses—three large old buildings, and two smaller ones.

The granary was big. . . .

How long had the land been owned by the family?

I do not know for certain. Grandmother told me that grandfather was a *capitan* [gobernadorcillo]. Only men with land became *capitanes*. The land must have belonged to them for a long time.

Did your father fight against the Spaniards?

Yes. In 1896–1897, in the War of the Katipunan. Father and grandfather were both soldiers. . . .

Did your father and grandfather fight the Americans?

They did not fight in 1898–1899. . . .

II. Her Grievances

When did you begin to consider the government as unjust to the people?

1930.

Why?

Because of the abuses against the people. The needs of the laborers were ignored. The leaders paid no attention to the people.

Before you became a Sakdal, were you a member of any other political group or party?

I was a *Nacionalista*. When I became disgusted with them, I joined the *Democratas* under old Sumulong.

Why were you disgusted? You said your family was well-to-do. Was there no property left?

None. It was all gone, even before I came of age. Father managed the lands. I did not bother about them. I was in Manila when it happened. The properties must have been sold. I do not know.

As tenants you were abused?

When we worked the land, we were cheated. The terms on the estate were 50–50. If the tenants harvested 1,000 tons, 500 were to go to the *proprietario* and 500 to the farmers. But we never got the agreed 50 per cent. We would get a mere 25 per cent, sometimes even less.

Did you share the 25 per cent?

We divided it among ourselves. But even then it amounted to less. They got all the disbursements back. All the expenses in planting were borne by us, even the land tax. We were very poor.

Then the basic problem was one of poverty or having enough to live?

Having enough, but without abuses.

Did you not protest?

Of course. But nothing happened. We even sent our case to Mr. Quezon and to Malacañang.

What happened?

Nothing.

It was poverty, then, and abuses which caused your discomfort?

No, it was more. There was a root cause behind everything. Nothing could solve our problems except independence, as the United States had promised. Freedom was the solution. From the time we were *Nacionalistas*, until we became *Democratas*, that was our goal. There was no other answer to the abuses and poverty. With independence the leaders would cease to be powerful. Instead, it would be the people who were powerful. The people would have their freedom. We would have our own lands; they would no longer be the monopoly of the *proprietarios* and of the government officials. As it was, we had nothing.

Your problem, in short, was poverty and power?

You might say that; that was our belief. Under independence, no one would be powerful, because the people would exercise power. . . .

III. Her Role in the Uprising

How and where was the uprising planned?

There was a meeting in our house on April 7, 1935. Only the local leaders were there. We talked of the rebellion and what each of us was to do. . . .

Were all the Sakdals in Laguna informed of the uprising?

No. Only key leaders in each town. They were to rally their followers when the time came to strike. Some important party members . . . were purposely kept in the dark. If they had known of the plot, it might have caused them trouble. Neither of the Sakdal congressmen favored violence. They were good men but somewhat passive.

What was the plan?

The people were to march to their municipal buildings, capture them, raise the Sakdal flag, and proclaim independence.

What kind of weapons did the Sakdals have?

Bolos, clubs, sickles, some shotguns, and a few revolvers.

In your plans, did it not occur to you that you would be fighting trained Constabulary soldiers equipped with rifles and, if necessary, with machine guns and cannons?

In my experience, the abused fellow does not care if there are cannons.

That might be, but behind the constables there was the power of America. Did you really think that you could achieve independence?

We had reason to believe the Constabulary and Philippine Scouts would join the uprising. We also believed other abused people would rebel when they learned of our action. If everyone joined the revolution we would have independence. . . .

Was there any fighting at the municipal building?

No. We entered the building—it was not locked—and ordered that the Sakdal flag be raised. . . .

Were there no officials or policemen at the municipal building?

The *presidente* was there and three policemen. The *presidente* asked if it would not be possible to stop the whole affair. We said no, it could not be stopped. "Very well," he said, "touch nothing, not even pencils and papers, and take nothing from the building." That is all there was to it.

What about the police?

They did nothing. One was even my uncle. . . .

(continued)

What about the incident with the Marines?

The Marines came up the highway from Los Baños. . . . The sergeant asked, "What's going on? Who are you? What do you want?" I said, "We are Sakdals! We want immediate, complete, and absolute independence." The sergeant said, "We don't know anything about any of this. I suggest you write to Congress. They have the answer to everything. Tell them what you want." I asked them for their side arms and the keys to the car. They gave me four .45s and the keys. I wrote them a receipt.

Did any of the men who were in the churchyard tell you how the firing began?

Governor Cailles and the constables spread out and advanced slowly down the street. The Governor called on the men to surrender. They refused. Governor Cailles gave the command, "Fuego! Attack!" That's what he said. Some fought back. Others ran away because they had no arms to fight with. . . .

Where did you go after the uprising failed?

No uprising fails. Each one is a step in the right direction. . . .

Where you captured?

I was not captured. I was taken to the authorities by my uncle. . . .

While you were in jail, were you questioned by any representative of Acting Governor General Hayden?

Yes, five Americans questioned me.

Were they in uniform? How did they treat you?

They wore civilian clothes. The man named Manley asked the questions. They treated me decently. They said they wanted to know why we had risen against the government; that I should feel free to talk, because they would not use what I said as evidence.

What did you tell them?

When he asked me what we wanted, I said, "Immediate, complete and absolute independence."

What did they say?

They agreed with me.

Where were you tried? What was your sentence?

There was a mass trial of Laguna Sakdals in Santa Cruz. . . . I was sentenced to the Women's Correctional in Mandaluyong, Rizal, for a term of six to ten years and fined P5,000. I was the only woman Sakdal to be imprisoned. I served one year, seven months, and three days. I was pardoned by President Quezon at the intercession of Vicente Sotto. . . .

This is a difficult question to answer, but how did you avoid becoming bitter? How did you remain a lady through that time in prison?

I was not bitter. I did what I thought was right. We lost and I was punished. The principles we fought for, and my faith in God, strengthened me. I also kept very busy. I learned everything I could about chickens. . . .

Are conditions better or worse now than they were then?

They are worse—far worse. All we are free to do now is talk.

After all you have been through and knowing the course of events, if you had it all to do again, would you do the same?

I am reluctant to say I will do something I cannot do. I am old. But I would do it again.

David Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines, 1840–1940* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), 288–99

THE COMMONWEALTH REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

The Origins of Philippine Authoritarianism?

Quezon used the Sakdal uprising and the organizing activities of the PKP to justify the centralization of state power under his presidency. He blamed the uprising on the government's failure to address social problems and maintain autonomy from the demands of competing social forces. Claro M. Recto, a leading critic of Nacionalista corruption, agreed with Quezon on the question of centralization and gave voice to the expectation that the president "will not only know how to govern, but will actually govern, with a firm and steady hand, unembarrassed by vexatious interferences by other departments, or by unholy alliances with this and that social group."⁴⁸ Quezon, however, had perhaps older and more personal motives for creating a president-centered "partyless democracy."

After he spent almost twenty years engaged in "politics," the establishment of the commonwealth was a high point for Quezon. But it was not in his nature to accept limitations on his power, even if he and Osmeña (now vice president) spent years in the legislature trying to restrict the power of executive offices they now occupied. If he wanted to remain "on top," the dispensation of patronage and spoils would not be enough. It became equally important to wield and expand the powers of the presidency; the pretext of effective governance may have just been convenient. Quezon deftly used his powers like a carrot and stick to dominate the legislature, bribing representatives with state largesse and pressuring them with the veto. In June 1940, after a popular referendum amended the constitution to re-create a Senate and House of Representatives,⁴⁹ Quezon successfully fought to make senatorial constituencies nationwide in order to "uproot the new Senate from its regional base . . . [and] render it an extension of his executive authority."⁵⁰

Quezon also appropriated and tightened control over such vital executive agencies as the Civil Service Bureau, the Bureau of the Budget, and the Bureau of Audit—critical instruments in the disbursal of patronage because they administered the flow of personnel and use of government monies.⁵¹ Through control of the civil service, Quezon packed the upper echelons of all executive departments with loyalists. The Bureau of the Budget was useful in demonstrating that the commonwealth executive was as capable of "balancing the budget" as American governor-generals; in fact, accounting feats hid a deficit that rose from 11 million pesos in 1936 to 44 million in 1938.⁵² Quezon also ordered the creation of a commonwealth army and ensured its loyalty to him by appointing officers he could trust and placing his American friend and business partner General Douglas MacArthur in command.

As president of the commonwealth, however, Quezon presided over a state built from the bottom up, local autonomy part of its foundational ideology. He therefore reached outward and downward to provincial, city, and municipal officials, and his firm control of the Nacionalista party gave him a nationwide structure through which to transmit policies and patronage. Joseph Hayden, American vice governor immediately before the Commonwealth period, wrote: "Governors, *presidentes* and the provincial representatives of the insular bureaus sought his approbation and feared his criticism. Other Governor-Generals sought to keep in personal touch with provincial affairs [but] they lacked the administrative staff which Mr. Quezon has developed." Hayden added, "No Governor-General ever disciplined half as many provincial governors as has President Quezon and large numbers of erring lesser local officials have been brought to book by him."⁵³

Quezon was not always in reproachful mode, of course. He kept local officials happy by ordering the national legislature to create new cities and by supporting tax exemptions for coconut oil, a core industry of his rural supporters. Above all, he kept local elites close to him by devoting "90 percent" of his relationship with them to dispensing patronage. With support from below secure, he could undercut the opposition and pressure reluctant allies in the capital. With the support of governors and city and municipal mayors, Quezon could "topple most national figures who threatened him," while continuing to "manipulate his colonial superiors."⁵⁴

The smooth running of these vertical and horizontal linkages was belied only by the Sakdalistas. Their revolt disrupted and exposed the incompleteness of the system, forcing Quezon to expand the circle of beneficiaries of "progressive conservatism."⁵⁵ He tinkered with tax laws to improve incomes, especially of the middle class, and proposed an ambitious program to address the economic problems of the poor. His "Social Justice" program would break up the landed estates and distribute them to cultivators, introduce social welfare measures such as the eight-hour working day and a minimum wage, expand the rights of workers and peasants (including the right to form unions) and their access to the courts, and create official resettlement programs to move families from densely populated areas to land-rich Mindanao.⁵⁶ All the reform measures submitted to the legislature passed—including the eight-hour day and the minimum wage—gaining Quezon some popular goodwill.⁵⁷ But nothing came of the proposal to break up the landed estates because of intense landlord opposition. The powerful presidency had found its limit; Quezon shelved the proposal and promised to hasten the settlement of Mindanao.⁵⁸ And the exploitative relationship of the countryside remained untouched, preserving the seeds of future revolts.

American officials watched with "discomfort . . . the erosion of democratic institutions and processes, the neglect of festering social problems and the waste of opportunities to prepare the new Philippine Republic for meaningful economic independence." But they supported Quezon because they saw no alternative. Fundamentally, the officials "were determined to avoid any confrontation with Quezon that might precipitate the overt reassertion of American sovereignty in the colony"⁵⁹—an action that was untenable in part because of past failure to dominate Philippine politics and in part because the future was set. The U.S. Congress had already decided to grant Philippine independence.

Historian Alfred W. McCoy suggests that the lineage of dictatorship in the Philippines—see chapter 8 on the tenure of President Ferdinand Marcos—can be traced to the Commonwealth period and the presidency of Manuel Quezon. McCoy provides ample evidence for this thesis, citing the many times Quezon wielded dictatorial powers to push his political and economic agenda, remunerate his cronies, and crush his enemies.⁶⁰ Quezon himself offers confirmation with remarks like the following (which reveal one or two other traits as well):

To tell the truth, gentlemen, I should like to continue being President of the Philippines if I were sure I would live 100 years. Have you ever known anyone who had voluntarily renounced power unless it was for a lady that, in his opinion was more important than power itself, or because of the threatening attitude of the people? Everybody likes power. It is the greatest urge of human nature. I like to exercise power.⁶¹

Yet this was more than simple kleptocracy and power grabbing. Quezon was indeed an autocrat, but he stood apart from his peers, including Osmeña, in seeing himself as a leader of what historian Peter Stanley calls a "nation in the making." He certainly coveted political power for his own ends, but also wanted Filipinos to see the office as *their* presidency, encouraging provincial audiences to see him differently than his American predecessors: "I'm a Filipino, so tell me the truth."⁶² He personalized both the office and the nation. In exile during World War II, dying of tuberculosis in an upstate New York hospital and realizing that he would never return to the Philippines, he indulged a peculiar fantasy: "Look at that man," he indignantly referred to his own reflection in the mirror. "Why did God give him such a body when I am here struggling for my life? I am Manuel L. Quezon—I am the Filipino people—I am the Philippines."⁶³

Such "megalomania" was not unique. The habit of autocrats identifying themselves with their country was quite pervasive at the time. In Soviet Russia, Josef Stalin was *Vozhd* (Leader or Boss) of the Russian people, while

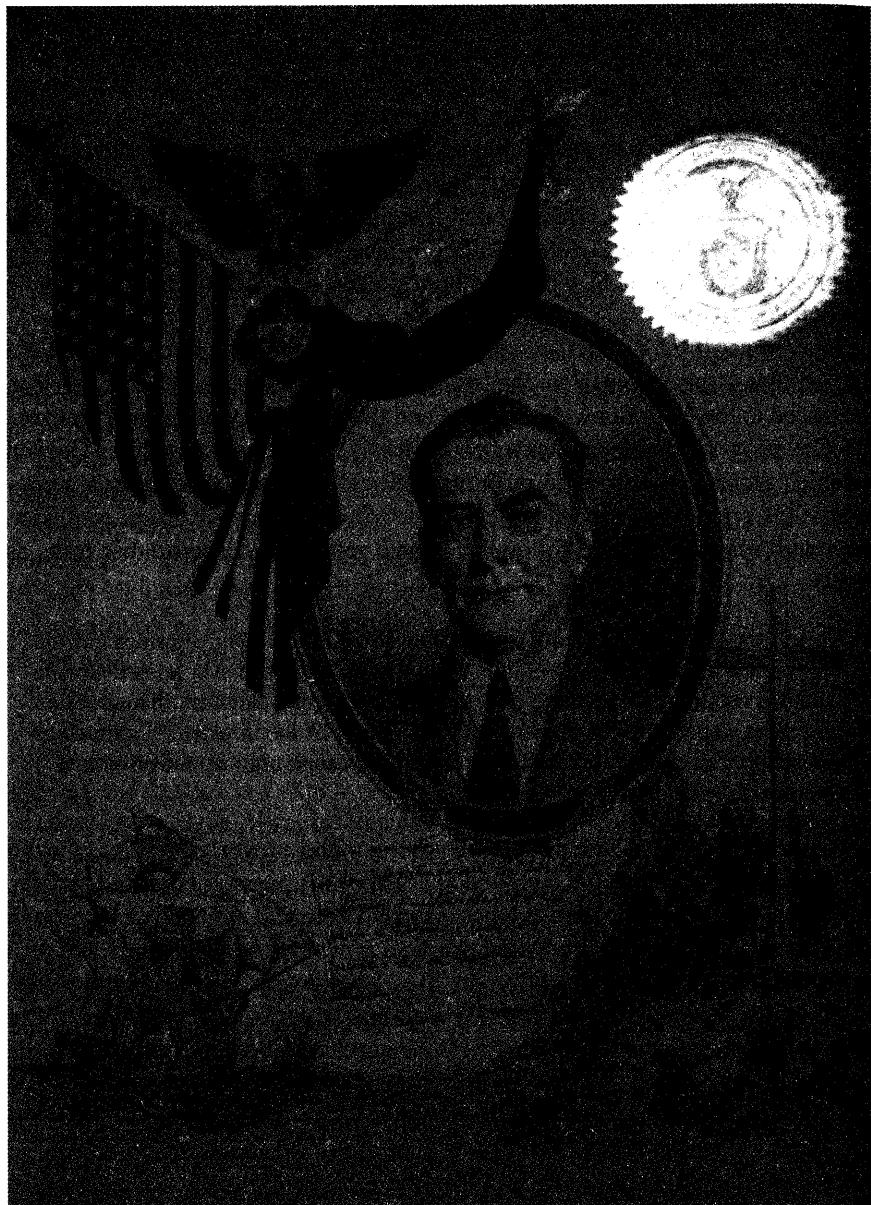


Figure 6.1. Representation of the Philippine Commonwealth: Map, friars, conquistadores, U.S. flag and American eagle, Commonwealth seal and flag . . . and Manuel Quezon (courtesy of the Lopez Memorial Museum, Philippines)

Benito Mussolini fashioned himself a Roman emperor. National-conservative regimes dominated Japan, Finland, and Poland, and nationalist-fascist parties ruled Italy, Hungary, Spain, and Argentina. Quezon's "progressive conservatism" and "partyless democracy" were in tune with the era's "retreat of liberal political institutions."⁶⁴ But because he was "the first Filipino politician with the power to integrate all levels of politics into a single system," as McCoy ably puts it,⁶⁵ Quezon was also an original. He set the precedent for future leaders seeking to strengthen state power because there was no one else to emulate.

In what sense was Quezon Filipino—that is, a product of the unique confluence of state and social forces prevailing at a particular time in the history of this "nation in the making"? We suggest that the deeper origins of "Philippine-style centralization" lie in the transition from late Spanish to revolutionary to American leadership at the turn of the century, especially in the interaction of the new American state with emergent Philippine social forces. By basing political power at the local level and offering patronage to likely prospects, the U.S. colonial state introduced a measure of sociopolitical mobility that allowed a new elite to supplant the Manila-based *ilustrados*. But failing utterly to reform the land tenure and tax structure quite undercut this mobility and condemned the vast majority of Filipinos to the crushing inequities of the old regime. These structural definitions helped perpetuate older models of social hierarchy and encouraged the new elites to emulate old habits of capital accumulation, production, and consumption. Moreover, the strict division between political power and so-called key agencies of state—perhaps a consequence of the party-Progressive battles current in U.S. politics—encouraged a predatory attitude on the part of Filipino politicians.

The combination of political decentralization and centralized state capacity "produced" Manuel Quezon. He rose through the political half of the system, without the strong institutionalist orientation of the Malolos generation or of the American Progressives. Is it so surprising that when both halves of the state fell into his lap, his centralization of the state would be "political"—accomplished through political means and in pursuit of his own political power?

Social Changes on the Eve of World War II

The Sakdal revolt was an indication of the persistence of social problems from the late Spanish into the American colonial period. This does not mean that Philippine society was unchanged by the new colonizers. Public education, the teaching of English, a mass media, commercialization, and electoral politics profoundly altered social life. Rich mestizo families continued to

prosper under American rule, their properties untouched and their children entering occupations aimed at enhancing status (medicine and the law) and promoting their economic interests (local and national politics). But a nascent urban “middle class” was also forming as state and market demanded economic specialization. New colleges offering diverse programs produced this urban white-collar workforce. By 1939, writes social demographer Daniel Doeppers, “Filipinos comprised almost 90 percent of all professionals in [Manila].”⁶⁶ The new professionals also included increasing numbers of women. Professions such as teaching, nursing, and pharmacology became common careers as both elite and middle-class families invested in their daughters’ secondary and college education.

American values of individual achievement, commercialism, and populism spread at the expense of a marginalized Spanish cultural matrix. The middle class epitomized this profound change in Philippine culture, acting as the main agent of American consumer culture brought into Filipino homes via radio, imported magazines, and Hollywood movies.⁶⁷ Tony Joaquin, nephew of a preeminent Filipino writer, describes how his own family made this profound cultural shift:

Leocadio Joaquin [Tony’s grandfather], a dashing, quick-witted, articulate barrister trained under the Spanish legal system and the *codigo civil* [civil code], was fluent in Spanish, but being pragmatic as well, he was one of the first to learn English knowing that many younger lawyers were already becoming adept in the new language. Ping himself [Tony’s father] had trained to become a classical pianist but he was drawn to the beat and the rhythms of jazz, the “low class music” that the Americanos had brought with them to the Philippines. For jazz, Ping abandoned his classical leanings. And so there were many who believed that he had, too easily, embraced the “music of the devil” and having done so, he no longer held much regard—not to mention respect—for the values and the attitudes of the past.⁶⁸

On the maternal side, Joaquin’s family was more attached to “socially established norms” and sent his mother to the Centro Escolar de Señoritas, where she “learned not only the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic but also how to converse and write in Spanish and French, and to acquire genteel, social and domestic manners.” She did not stop at this “finishing school,” however, but continued her education at the U.S.-established, competitive, public University of the Philippines (established 1908), where she interacted with the brightest children of the middle class and the poor. She graduated with a degree in psychology and taught at a small college—“a feat rather unusual for any young middle class Filipino woman . . . of that day.”⁶⁹ These were young people whose values and ambitions were much closer to

middle-class Americans than to the *ilustrados* of the late Spanish period. As Joaquin notes, it wasn’t yet a typical path, but it was trend-setting.

The political perspective of this middle class was visibly influenced more by Quezon and the Nacionalistas than by the older generation of revolutionary and *ilustrado* leaders. They accepted American colonial rule and Filipinization and saw themselves as “fiscalizers,” young people who wanted government to work better. The more boisterous of these “reformers” organized the Young Philippines Party (YPP) on December 27, 1933, which called on “men and women of liberal tendencies to take a vigilant attitude towards public questions confronting the country and contribute in their humble way to the formation of a vigorous public opinion.”⁷⁰ The YPP elected its president to the Constitutional Convention and worked with the Nacionalistas for “better governance.” This was American-type civics at work.

Chinese residents of the Philippines, as noted in chapter 5, were once again marked as outsiders in this period. The Philippine Commission extended American exclusion laws to the Philippines, ending legal Chinese immigration until 1941, when the Commonwealth government allowed an annual quota of five hundred immigrants per nationality to come into the country. The immigration ban compelled Chinese men to marry within the community instead of traveling to the mainland and returning with a Chinese bride. As a result, the Chinese grew more cohesive yet and organized a unified association to lobby the state for their interests. But a protected U.S. market for Philippine exports favored Filipino elites and forced the Chinese to shift their attention back to domestic retail, where they dominated groceries and hardware. Not all Chinese families survived efforts of Filipino leaders to “nationalize” the economy; those who did spoke English, were Christian, had highly educated children, and maintained close contact with Americans and Filipinos.⁷¹

WORLD WAR II AND THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The Japanese launched an air raid on military facilities in the Philippines on December 8, 1941, within hours of their attack on Pearl Harbor. A hastily organized, ill-prepared Filipino-American force resisted the invading Japanese with exceptional bravery, but was defeated by the sheer military superiority of its opponent. General Douglas MacArthur retreated to Australia, vowing to return to liberate the Philippines. An ailing Manuel Quezon, Sergio Osmeña, and a number of their staff were ferried to Australia and hence to the United States to establish a government in exile. Meanwhile, the new colonial power set about consolidating rule of the colony. Japan’s rhetoric justified the war as

an expression of fraternal solidarity with Asian peoples seeking to end Western colonialism. The Japanese colonial regime in the Philippines invoked the nationalist themes of the Revolution and implemented programs to eliminate American influence in society. In its “Asia for the Asians,” Japan continued to allow Filipinos to run the government, although they were more closely supervised than under the Commonwealth.

In 1943, the Japanese granted the Philippines independence and installed a “Second Republic.”⁷² We share the observation of many scholars that this “puppet regime” represented continuity with Quezon’s Commonwealth, but note that the interregnum also served to turn the kaleidoscope, altering perspectives on collaboration and resistance and allowing suppressed nationalist visions to reemerge. Regionally, the Japanese invasion of Southeast Asia marked the beginning of the end of Western rule and emboldened anticolonial nationalist movements to push for independence. The Philippines defied this trend. Most Filipino leaders who collaborated with the Japanese did so for pragmatic reasons—the Americans had abandoned them—or in compliance with Quezon’s directive to work with the invaders to prevent political and social breakdown. Comprising the majority of Filipino officials, these collaborators provided continuity between the deposed Commonwealth and the new Japanese-controlled regime.⁷³

There was also a segment of the Filipino elite that hoped to restore the nationalism of the revolution aborted by the Americans and transformed by the likes of Quezon and Osmeña. They saw the new order as an opportunity to pursue alternative nationalist programs: teaching and writing in Filipino languages, restoring the Philippine Revolution to the national history books, and developing the perspective of the Philippines as part of Asia. José P. Laurel, president of the Second Republic, remained loyal to Quezon and justified his position on the grounds of deterring Japanese abuse of Filipinos and stabilizing the polity. But Laurel also defended the new order as an opportunity to revive long-suppressed “anti-imperialist” sentiments.

His justification of collaboration in nationalist terms was perfectly understandable. Laurel came from the province of Batangas, where some of the bloodiest fighting between American soldiers and Filipino revolutionaries had taken place and where pacification had been harsh. His family had actively supported the revolutionaries and were critical of U.S. rule even after joining the Nacionalistas and agreeing to play by the colonial rules. Laurel thus saw the Second Republic as a chance to fight for the principles of the Katipunan and the Malolos Republic. His was a minority view, however.⁷⁴ When the tide of war began to change, Laurel would be abandoned by colleagues more concerned with their own preservation once U.S. power was restored.



Figure 6.2. Manila, 1941: Declared an open city to avert destruction by entering Japanese forces (courtesy of the Philippine National Historical Institute)

After defeat in its one major battle of the war—on the Bataan Peninsula northwest of Manila—the U.S. Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFFE) broke into various smaller “commands” and waged guerrilla war against the invaders. Some did so valiantly (the guerrilla commands in the southern Philippines), while others fought halfheartedly, content to await General MacArthur’s return. Some commands turned their guns on each other, trying to control scarce resources and establish “turf” in the countryside. In Mindanao and the Visayas, inter-guerrilla rifts were endemic, prompting MacArthur to send an emissary to reconcile the rival forces. Many Filipino commanders of these groups would later convert them into the private armies that became a feature of postwar politics.⁷⁵

The only sustained armed resistance against the Japanese came from the “people’s army” of the PKP. The party’s Hukbong Bayan laban sa Hapon (People’s Anti-Japanese Army), or Hukbalahap, carved out “liberated zones” in several provinces north of Manila, harassing Japanese troops and mobilizing peasant communities to maintain economic activity on agricultural estates abandoned by landlords.⁷⁶ Like most Communist parties in Asia, the PKP toned down its radicalism in favor of a broad “anti-fascist” coalition against Japan. And many peasant fighters and Communist cadres believed that the returning American army would regard them as allies. But as the liberation of



Figure 6.3. Refugees in Manila, 1945: The city was largely destroyed during its recapture (courtesy of the Philippine National Historical Institute)

the Philippines began in earnest, the American army, USAFFE guerrillas, and members of the Filipino elite saw the Hukbalahap’s peasant organizing as an obstacle to the reclamation of landed estates. They would soon join forces to eliminate this radical wing of the anti-Japanese opposition.⁷⁷

The U.S. military invaded the country in late 1944 and General MacArthur’s forces advanced rapidly from their landing base in the central Philippines toward Manila. A brutal one-month battle to take Manila cost the lives of a thousand Americans, sixteen thousand Japanese, and tens of thousands of Filipinos. Eighty percent of Manila was destroyed, making it the second most damaged city in the war after Warsaw.⁷⁸ Osmeña returned to the Philippines to deal with the officials who had collaborated with the Japanese. But MacArthur had already taken sides on this issue, protecting collaborators who were his friends and business associates from prosecution.⁷⁹ While “war trials” were held in the immediate postwar period, no major political figure experienced any significant jail time. As Joel David Steinberg curtly put it: “The elite survived.”⁸⁰

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Chapter Seven

All Politics Is Local, 1946–1964

THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

In this chapter, we discuss the tenure of the first five postwar Philippine presidents: Manuel Roxas, Elpidio Quirino, Ramon Magsaysay, Carlos García, and Diosdado Macapagal. These presidents committed themselves to a national economic development plan based on close ties with the United States. Having encountered lower-class insurrections in the past, they promised to “liberate” the peasantry from bondage but stopped short of destroying landlord power. Instead, they attempted to expand agricultural productivity through technological inputs, credits, and social welfare programs. Opening up the largest land frontier in Mindanao also provided a safety valve for the volatile countryside.

All five presidents adhered to the democratic rituals established in the Commonwealth era, despite occasional attempts to subvert the rules of the game. They were also practitioners of patronage, but were enjoined to steer the newly independent country toward full “modernization.” In the regional context of the Cold War—Communist victory in China, the politics of nonalignment in Southeast Asia, and expanding nationalist-Communist revolution in Indochina—they wanted to prove “American-style” democracy superior to its radical rivals. These pressures and the challenge of a domestic Communist rebellion demanded attention to effective governance. “Islands of state strength” began to appear inside the postcolonial Philippine state. At the same time, however, the institutional and social limits on state building became abundantly clear.

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To Angela Marie Amoroso Abinales,
in memory of her mother, Donna J. Amoroso