

# The Situation in the Philippines

By Luke E. Wright, Governor General of the Islands

**A**S EVIDENCE of the harmony of views as to the American policy in the Philippines between the administration, Judge Taft, who is to become secretary of war, and General Wright, who will succeed Governor Taft, the Outlook reproduces the following address delivered by General Wright at a banquet given in his honor at Memphis in November of last year. The address is published with consent of General Wright and from a revised copy furnished by him:

The United States, under the treaty of Paris, added these islands to its territory and thereby became responsible for their future. The question as to whether this step was wise or otherwise, in the light of accomplished events, must be purely an academic question. The only practical question presenting itself after the ratification of the treaty was as to the policies which should be pursued in establishing and conducting a government. This question was the more difficult, both because we had no experience in the government of Oriental peoples and because of the hostility of a large part of the inhabitants of the islands. In looking around for precedents to guide us the course of the English during a period of several centuries in dealing with Orientals of kindred races, at first blush, seemed to furnish the safest guide. In a certain sense the English had been eminently successful. They had maintained peace and order, protected life and property and in many ways added to the happiness and welfare of the governed. The English, however, invariably assumed it as axiomatic that these people were not and never could become capable of self-government, or even of taking a considerable share in their own affairs, and that, therefore, a permanent policy of paternalism was essential. Their administration was purely English, natives being employed only in the most subordinate positions, and no attempt being made to develop and build up in the native, by practical experience, a capacity to govern.

President McKinley and his cabinet could very well have contented themselves with following a precedent so eminently respectable. The idea, however, of establishing a government upon the basic principles adopted by the English in their crown colonies was repugnant to American traditions and ideas. Realizing that the people of the United States were unwilling to embark upon a foreign colonial policy after this or other similar models, the bold experiment was determined upon of inaugurating a scheme of government which assumed that, however, inexperienced and unfit the Filipino people then were to govern themselves, they could, by education and proper guidance, in time probably become fit. The grafting of American methods upon a Malay stock, upon which had been imposed a veneering of Spanish civilization, was, to say the least of it, an original conception, success being rendered the more problematical by the fact that the islands were at that time in a blaze of insurrection against American authority. It was determined, however, to make the experiment, and to give them from the beginning such a share in the government as they were capable of undertaking, that share to be increased from time to time as might be warranted by experience.

The president appointed a civil commission for the purpose of establishing civil government in the islands as soon as armed opposition to the American government should be at an end. The instructions which he gave that commission, and which, as I understand, were actually drafted by Secretary Root, embodied the general principles by which they were to be governed. Whatever opinions there may have been among our fellow-citizens as to the desirability of our government having become responsible for affairs in the Philippines, I feel sure that there can be none as to the humane and generous spirit in which these instructions were written. So far as could be done by precept and injunction, Mr. McKinley sought to establish government in the Philippines primarily for the benefit of the Filipino people themselves. These instructions were an appeal to their intelligence and confidence. No Filipino could read this message of good will without a sentiment of thankfulness for the future it promised. No American could read it without an increased admiration and affection for the president and his great war secretary, and a firm purpose to deal justly with this long-suffering and unfortunate people, so suddenly placed in our hands by a strange Providence. This document will take rank as a classic among state papers, and is worthy of comparison with the best production of American statesmanship. To the commission it was not only chart and compass, but an inspiration impelling their best efforts.

It hardly becomes me to speak concerning the quality of the work done by the commission. That must be judged upon its merits, and its value tested by the event. I may say, however, that the members of that body approached their labors fully imbued with the spirit of the instructions they had received. The task of bringing to the knowledge of the people the benevolent purposes of our government, not the least important of the work falling

to their hands, was begun immediately upon their arrival in the islands. The legislation made necessary in order to establish civil government necessarily covered a wide field, including almost every subject involved in government as we understand it, and many others growing out of conditions peculiar to the people. Upon Judge William H. Taft, from the first the president of the commission and afterward civil governor, fell perhaps more largely than upon the other members the burden of the work. His labors were herculean and I may say that those of his associates were not light. Under the stress of overwork the governor was forced, even with his splendid vitality, temporarily to return to the United States. Although his health was in a critical condition, he still continued his labors before committees of congress, in bringing to their attention the needs of the Filipino people and the conditions which there prevailed. Judge Ide, another member of the commission, also succumbed and was forced to go to Japan to recuperate, but during his absence prepared the drafts of important measures relating to the land laws of the islands. The other members of the commission have been more fortunate. While, as will be seen from the foregoing, our task has been onerous, I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of my stay in the Philippines. There was something in the task cut out for us so large and interesting as to arouse every energy and to furnish continual entertainment. From the beginning we were encouraged by finding that a large proportion of the thoughtful and intelligent Filipinos, with whom we came in contact, were prepared to give us their confidence, and hailed with delight the message which we brought. As they were made to understand the purposes and object of our government in dealing with them they readily fell into line and gave us hearty co-operation. They organized the federal party, whose principal object was to bring an end to the insurrection and secure loyal submission to American authority.

It would be manifestly unfair for me to ascribe the general pacification which followed entirely to the work of the civil government or to its Filipino allies. Undoubtedly the moral forces put in motion by the commission played an important part, but it required the army and navy of the United States to put down insurrection in the field. Indeed, this was a prerequisite to the accomplishment of anything of a substantial character by the commission. That our soldiers and sailors did their duty, oftentimes under circumstances of great embarrassment and difficulty, is a matter of history. They are entitled to, and I am sure will receive, the plaudits of their countrymen. In this connection I cannot refrain from saying that much of the criticism indulged in as to their operation in the Philippines is unwarranted, as I am enabled by personal observation to bear witness. I would not pretend to say that there were not isolated instances of wrong and outrage perpetrated upon the inhabitants, but I do mean to say that such instances were the exception and not the rule. It is to be remembered that there were at one time about 700 small detachments of our forces scattered around the islands, engaged in meeting a guerrilla foe who did not carry on operations according to the laws of civilized warfare, but from day to day donned or doffed the insurgent uniform, as exigencies required, and oftentimes perpe-

trated revolting cruelties upon friendly Filipinos and American soldiers. The difficulty of maintaining, at all times, rigid discipline under such circumstances can be fully understood only by an eye-witness. As a whole, it may be truthfully said that war in the Philippines has been conducted in a civilized and humane way.

Major General Adna R. Chaffee, who was responsible for the policy pursued in those provinces, and Brigadier General James F. Bell who executed that policy, are both well known to me socially and officially, and I have for them both esteem and admiration as soldiers and as men. General Chaffee has a reputation for courage, ability, and humanity extending beyond the boundaries of this nation. General Bell has not only a most creditable record for gallantry and efficiency, but is in reality one of the most kindly and humane natures I have ever had the good fortune to meet. He has many devoted friends and admirers among the Filipino people themselves. There were perhaps 3,000 rifles in the hands of the insurgents in the two provinces named. One day they were in the field with arms in their hands, and the next, having buried their guns, were in the towns circulating with our own soldiers as peaceful, inoffensive noncombatants. They drew their supplies from the people in the towns, who either sympathized with them or feared not to honor their requisitions. It was wholly impossible to conduct war against them effectively, as against an organized and uniformed enemy under the usual conditions which obtain in war. The program carried out by General Bell was not conceived or executed in a spirit of vengeance. It did not involve the starving or killing of any peaceful or innocent inhabitants, but its purpose was to make it impossible for them to furnish supplies to the insurgents, and thereby force the latter to come in and surrender their guns. This policy was pursued with eminent success, and at a very small loss of life. The actual mortality among both insurgents and people within the reconcentrado districts, as I have every reason to believe, did not exceed 750 souls in the aggregate. The ranks of the insurgents in Batangas were filled with the die-in-the-last-ditch contingent, and when the mountainous character of the country is considered, together with the methods of warfare pursued, it is safe to say that, but for some such policy, years would have elapsed before peace prevailed in the Philippines. It was perfectly apparent to every Filipino that the possibility of successful resistance to American authority had long since ended. This small knot of insurgents in Batangas was delaying the complete pacification of the islands, preventing the establishment of civil government, and thereby inflicting irreparable injury upon the Filipinos themselves. It has always been a false humanity to have hesitated to pursue the course adopted.

There is another subject about which I desire to say just a word, and that is as to the alleged friction which arose at one time between the military and civil authorities. This, again, was greatly exaggerated, and, speaking broadly, had no real existence. It must be remembered that when the commission first appeared upon the scene in the Philippines Major General MacArthur was not only commanding the military force in the field, but was military governor. The policy of the president, as set forth in his instructions, to which I have already referred, was, as fast as possible, to substitute civil for military authority.

On July 4, 1901, Judge Taft was created civil governor, relieving General MacArthur from that portion of his functions which related to civil government. The commission, from the beginning, had shaped its legislation with a view to this change as soon as it was feasible. There was what may be termed a period of transition from military to civil government beginning several months before the date named and ending a few months thereafter. During this period both the military and civil authorities were operating in the same general sphere. It not infrequently happens that there were clashes between the subordinate military and civil officials upon questions of jurisdiction, and occasionally differences arose between the major general commanding and the civil governor. These were mainly, however, merely matters of detail, and to their adjustment both the military and the civil authorities addressed themselves, fully appreciating that in the aggregate they were the representatives of the American people in the islands, and that any serious conflict between the two arms of the government would not only result in lamentable confusion, but in the lowering of American prestige as well. As a consequence, the transfer was made without any real conflict or serious difficulty. The military authorities, after they had been thus superseded in what might be termed their civil functions, invariably assisted the civil government, when called on, in the matter of detaching military officers to civil duties, in supplying stores from military depots, in aiding in the suppression of epidemics and otherwise.

You are doubtless familiar, at least in a general way, with the plan adopted for the government of the Philippine islands at the last session of congress. That plan has been, in the main, based upon recommendations made by Governor Taft and the commission, with such modifications as to congress seemed best. It provides for a civil governor to be appointed by the president; a bicameral legislature, one branch of which is to be elected by the Filipino people, the effect of which is to still further increase the share of the Filipinos in their own government. Upon examination of the act it will be seen that this participation is real and not nominal. To any one acquainted with the real situation in the archipelago, I think it is evident that the congress in this legislation has gone fully as far as the best interests of the people themselves warrant. Indeed, some critics, both hostile and friendly, have asserted that both congress and the commission have gone too far. Of course this is only a matter of opinion. My own opinion is that, if error has been committed at all, it is in the right direction. It would, however, have been sheer folly, and detrimental to the Filipino people themselves, to have withdrawn American supervision and guidance and turned over the islands to their sole administration. This conclusion has been reached not alone from our own observation and study, but also from the opinions of the most distinguished, patriotic, and intelligent Filipinos.

In reaching this conclusion it has not been overlooked that no people could be taught to govern themselves without practical experience in government. It has been felt with equal conviction that a people absolutely without practical knowledge, whose only conceptions of government have been derived from an observation of Spanish

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BUILDING COMMITTEE WHO HAD CHARGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE A. O. U. W. TEMPLE AT SOUTH OMAHA