

**U.S. Philippine Policy and the Interpretation of National Interest**  
**--The FDR Administration and the Philippine Question, 1935-42--**

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***Introduction***

Throughout the first half of twentieth century, the US faced difficulty in adapting to its rapidly expanding commitment in Asia, not only in the sense of political and military preparedness, but with respect to personnel. These circumstances caused US Asian policy to be handled in many cases by "under-informed" and "unconcerned" people who were neither familiar with nor much concerned about the countries or regions they were dealing with. The decisions of such people sometimes resulted in grave consequences for both the Asian and American peoples.

"The well-informed and concerned," of course, do not always make the "right" decisions. It is not a matter of merit or demerit, but a question of differences in decision making between "the under-informed and unconcerned" and "the well-informed and concerned." Comparing the two groups, first, the former must confront information and opinions provided by the latter *when available*, but don't necessarily respect them; and secondly, the former tends to link matters in question to other political goals which they interpret as more important to the US "national interest," while it is not easy for the latter to avoid being influenced by "sentimentality" and such personal concerns as job seeking and personal/financial ties with their "friends" and "brothers" in the countries they are dealing with.

This paper is a case study focusing on the process by which the Franklin D. Roosevelt (hereafter abbreviated as the FDR) administration formed its Philippine policy during 1936-37, when revisions of the Philippine Independence Act of 1934, the Tydings-McDuffie Act (hereafter abbreviated as the T-M Act) was the most important issue. Here, decisions were made on a colony which had been under the American flag for over 30 years by what can be unmistakably termed "the under-informed and unconcerned." What I will try to answer are the questions of what was the interpretation of Philippine affairs and how **it influenced** the outcome of the administration's policy through an analysis of the policy making process and its background, including reference to later policy developments up to the attack on Pearl Harbor. While readers of this paper will find undeniable idiosyncrasies in US colonial policy, the author hopes this case study to give some insight to the general context of US foreign relations with "unfamiliar" regions and countries and thus contribute to discussions on "America and Asia: Evolution of a Relationship."

***Background to the Question: the Philippine Independence Act and Its Revision Problem***

One important aspect of US colonial policy toward the Philippines, in comparison with other powers, was an apparent lack of consensus, with the exception of the nebulous idea of the "white man's burden," among American politicians and government officials concerning the significance of possessing the Philippines as a colony. This lack of consensus led to a US Congressional decision in the midst of the Great Depression to abandon the colony, resulting in the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth in November 1935 as an autonomous government which was required to attain "complete independence"

in July 1946.

The decision itself was made by congressmen and senators who were "unconcerned" and even "angry" about their colonial bond with the Philippines. When the original Independence Act, the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act of 1933 (hereafter the H-H-C Act) was discussed on the senate floor in December 1932, a number of senators expressed their frustration over the Philippines. For example, senior Republican senator from Ohio, Simeon D. Fess, who was opposed to Philippine independence changed his mind and supported the bill because "we are considering less our own interests than the interests of the Filipinos, I have concluded the time has come when we should consider our own interests as well as those of the Filipinos,"<sup>1</sup> and another Republican senator Arthur R. Robinson from Indiana went as far as to say "they [Filipinos] are the most ungrateful people in the world.... they are not entitled to any special consideration from the United States as I view it, not the slightest in the world."<sup>2</sup> These senators might have been merely taking it out on the Filipinos for the Republican party's historic defeat in the November elections; however, one cannot overlook the fact that such statements reflected the feelings among the American public that colonial bonds solely benefited the Philippines and that the colony was only a liability and a burden for America.

This negative assessment of Philippine-US colonial relations originated in the dissatisfaction over Philippine-US preferential trade, which had become reciprocally duty-free in 1913. This policy favored such Philippine agricultural exports to the US as cane-sugar, coconut oil, copra, Manila hemp, and tobacco leaves, all of which competed with American agricultural producers in the beet-sugar, cottonseed oil, and dairy product industries. These domestic products had suffered from overproduction and price declines long before the beginning of the Great Depression. Congressional support for Philippine independence, which was promoted by agricultural lobbies and fueled by the Great Depression mentality looming over Congress, was chiefly motivated by the idea of getting rid of the Philippines in the interest of agricultural protectionism, then taking away its preferential treatment after independence.<sup>3</sup>

This resulted in the H-H-C Act, which passed Congress in January 1933 overriding a Presidential veto. Section 6 of the Act specified ten years of Commonwealth status as a transitory period during which the Philippines was expected to free itself from its economic dependence on duty-free exports to the US market. To attain this purpose, Section 6 provided duty-free quotas for the four major Philippine agricultural products (sugar, coconut oil, hemp, and tobacco) during the first half of the Commonwealth era. During the latter half, export taxes were to be levied on exports to the US in general as well as on the four major products within quota limits, beginning at the rate of 5% of full tariffs, to be raised by 5% per year until reaching 25%. A 100% export tax was to be levied on the four major products over quota limits throughout the period. After independence all colonial preferences were to be abolished and full tariffs levied on all Philippine exports to the US.

For the Philippine economy, which had become dependent on agricultural exports to the US market from the late 1910s, the proposed gradual reduction and final abolishment of trade preference in the US market was expected have very damaging effects. The most concerned economic group was the Filipino landed elite, who had profited most by booming agricultural exports to the US market.<sup>4</sup> They had also

enjoyed the fruits of the US "Filipinization" policy, which gave Filipinos maximum autonomy by dominating the Philippine legislature from its establishment in 1907 as well as monopolizing colonial government positions, including cabinet posts, which were 96% "Filipinized" before 1921. As nationalists leading the independence movement from late 19th century, however, the Filipino landed elite had repeatedly asked the US Congress for "immediate, unconditional and complete" independence through successive resident commissioners sent to Capitol Hill by the Philippine legislature from 1916. The congressional move toward Philippine independence in the midst of the Great Depression was not in line with the scenario they had envisioned, but they could not but continue their call for independence, at least in public. The Philippine Independence Commission (the ninth Mission to the US) was sent to Washington DC not only to realize it publicly announced purpose of "immediate, unconditional and complete" independence, but also to achieve a non-publicized, but equally important mission to protect commercial interests of the Filipino landed elite.

It was only natural that the Philippine legislature wavered in its unanimous determination for independence when it heard of the harsh trade provisions under of the H-H-C Act. Then there erupted the severest political battle in Philippine legislative history between the "Antis" led by Manuel Quezon, who opposed the H-H-C Act, and the "Pros" led by Sergio Osmeña and Manuel Roxas, who supported it merely because they had headed the Independence Mission. In October 1933, the Philippine legislature finally killed the H-H-C Act by refusing concurrent resolution required by the Act as the expression of the Filipino people's will to proceed. The resolution of refusal listed four reasons: (1) trade provisions would seriously imperil the economic, social, and political institutions of the Philippines; (2) the Act's exclusion of Filipino immigrants was objectionable and offensive to the Filipino people; (3) the powers of the U.S. High Commissioner were too indefinite; and (4) the military, naval, and other reservations in the act were inconsistent with true independence.<sup>5</sup> Quezon, leading a new mission, immediately sailed to the US to negotiate for a better Independence Act.

Given a chilly response by Congress, Quezon asked for help from his friend, Henry L. Stimson, who had become one of a few high ranking political figures who was "well-informed and concerned" about the Philippine affairs during his career as a former Secretary of War (1911-13), Governor-General (1928-29), and Secretary of State during Hoover administration (1929-33).<sup>6</sup> Stimson was determinedly against Philippine Independence because he believed the Philippines would become "a physical base for American influence — political, economic, and social — in the Far East." According to Stimson, "in the Orient, far more even than in the Occident, prestige is the measuring rod of success." Withdrawal of American sovereignty from the Philippines "would be an irreparable blow to American influence."<sup>7</sup>

In addition to this assessment of the US colonial possession in the Far East, Stimson accurately understood from his experiences as Governor-General of the Philippines that what the Filipino elite politicians wanted was not "complete independence" but "complete autonomy" with permanent association with the US. He presented his "dominion" plan to both Hoover and FDR, arguing that what the Filipinos wanted was "autonomy" with permanent association and that trade and immigration restriction acceptable to both countries could surely be worked out. Here one finds a consensus between

the Filipino landed elite and the "well-informed and concerned" American retentionist; but these views were not shared by Congress or the American public at the time, limiting Quezon's effort to no more than a new Independence Act, the T-M Act which was almost identical to the first one except for the addition of a 50-words clause making it clear that US army bases would be removed after independence. The act passed Congress in March 1934 and was approved by the Philippine legislature with unanimous concurrent resolution in May.

The T-M Act, as well as H-H-C Act, however, did not simply imply the abandonment of a colony, but also contained many clauses with items to be settled later pending the outcome of Philippine-US talks after the establishment of the Commonwealth in November 1935. For example, Section 13 of the T-M Act stated that a conference to discuss future trade relations was to be held between the two countries at least one year prior to the date of independence. Moreover, FDR stated in his message to the Congress asking for passage of the T-M Act that "where imperfections or inequalities exist... they can be worked out later upon proper hearing and, I hope, in fairness to both people."<sup>8</sup> This statement was regarded by the Filipino landed elite as an important promise to revise the Act in a few years and helped Quezon to save face, secure his position as a political leader with no equal and eventually become the first President of the Philippine Commonwealth.

There were other important pending questions regarding the political and military phases of Philippine independence. Section 11 stipulated that "the President (of the US) is requested, at the earliest practicable date, to enter into negotiations with foreign powers with a view to the conclusion of a treaty for the perpetual neutralization of the Philippine Islands, if and when Philippine independence shall have been achieved." It goes without saying that in the age of "Far Eastern Crisis," whatever the US government did to follow up this provision had no small meaning. Section 10 (b) as well, stipulated 1) that negotiations be held between the two countries no later than two years after independence to settle questions relating to naval reservations and fueling stations in the Philippines and 2) that pending the outcome of such negotiations, the matter of naval reservations and fueling stations "shall remain in its present status." Again we find a provision directly related to the future of Philippine military affairs.

In sum, the T-M Act announced that the US would cut its colonial ties to the Philippines upon granting "complete independence" *if there were no revision*, leaving much to be decided in upcoming Philippine-US talks. Thus, how to revise the Independence Act became a most important pending question for the two countries. Let us now look at the way in which the FDR administration tried deal with this question.

### ***Leadership in policy formation***

On January 23, 1937, President Quezon departed for the US in order to begin negotiations concerning the T-M Act revisions. The following sections of this paper will deal with the way in which the FDR administration dealt with this question.

Stimson got the impression from his conversation with FDR in January 1933 that the new President was much more sympathetic to his views on the Philippine affairs than his chief (Hoover), who thought the annexation of the Philippines had been regrettable.<sup>9</sup> Quezon met FDR in December 1933 and felt that

to his "agreeable surprise" FDR had such comprehension and understanding of the problems that "really astonished" him.<sup>10</sup> Aside from the question of whether FDR was sympathetic to Stimson's "dominion" plan or the commercial interests of the Filipino landed elite, the historical record confirms that FDR was one American president relatively well-informed and concerned about Philippine affairs. However, he seldom took any personal initiative on this matter, since it was, after all, of minor political concern. The administration's Philippine policy was shaped through a policy coordinating process among government agencies with different approaches and interests. Leadership in decision making was not necessarily monopolized by a single agency, but rather changed as the occasion demanded.<sup>11</sup>

In terms of jurisdiction, Philippine affairs had been handled by the Bureau of Insular Affairs (hereafter BIA) at the War Department from the time of annexation until the establishment of the Commonwealth. The BIA, though, lacked both personnel and budget to play a positive roll in policy making, while the colonial government in Manila was being rapidly "Filipinized." In other words, long before the establishment of the Commonwealth, the US government and its colonial officers in Manila had become more inspectors than administrators.<sup>12</sup> In May 1934 the Division of Territories and Island Possessions was established in the Interior Department and jurisdiction of the BIA was gradually transferred to the Division. In July 1939 the BIA was finally abolished and the Interior Department took over the affairs of the War Department, which included the Philippines.

More significant, however, was the leadership taken by the State Department with respect to revising the T-M Act. In December 1935, the Interdepartmental Committee on Philippine Affairs (hereafter ICPA) was established with members from the departments of State, War, Finance, Agriculture and Commerce, as well as the US tariff commission. Assistant Secretary of State Francis B. Sayre was appointed chairperson of the committee. This arrangement was based on a mutual understanding between FDR and Secretary of State Cordell Hull that the primary responsibilities should be borne by the State Department in revising the T-M Act, which could not be separated from US foreign policy toward the Far Eastern affairs.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, the State Department created the Office of Philippine Affairs in the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (hereafter FE) in December 1936.<sup>14</sup>

Douglas MacArthur, who became the supreme military adviser to the Philippine Commonwealth and was another high ranking official "concerned" about the Philippine affairs, was not very happy with these arrangements. In 1938 he lamented during a conversation at a private dinner that Philippine affairs "are now managed in the State Department by Francis Sayre" and commented that they regard the Philippines as "a foreign country already—and even, perhaps, an unfriendly country!" MacArthur added that when he told Sayre that culturally and historically the Philippines was a part of Latin America and the US should make it a part of its Pan American system, "Sayre nearly blew up and stated: 'You must not say that.'"<sup>15</sup>

This anecdote indicates that State Department officials, unlike Stimson or MacArthur, adopted neither "sentimental" nor "bureaucratic" attitudes because they had had little to do with the Philippine affairs in the past. Consequently they were inclined to link the problem to relevant matters which in their opinion seemed to be more important to US foreign policy and national interest. The department, however, was not unanimous about what was the more important issues in connection with Philippine

affairs. ICPA Chairperson Sayre attached importance to reciprocal trade policy, while FE consistently took Far Eastern concerns, which China problem was first on the list, into consideration. Let us look at what different views on Philippine affairs existed in the light of such concerns.

***Relevant Matters (1): Reciprocal Trade Agreements Policy***

In December 1936, the State Department announced its views on the coming Philippine-US talks concerning the T-M Act revisions and stated its purpose on drafting recommendations to the US Congress concerning the revisions in accordance with the "US general commercial policy,"<sup>16</sup> i.e., reciprocal trade agreements promoted by Secretary Hull and the advocates of free trade in the department including Sayre.

Hull, a veteran Democratic congressman from Tennessee, was a firm believer in free trade principles and Wilsonian internationalism, although during his long career he had had little to do with Philippine affairs, unlike his predecessor Stimson.<sup>17</sup> Holding negative views on the New Dealers' "radical" economic reformism, Hull attributed shrinking world trade to protective high tariffs instituted by the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act of 1930 and was convinced that the rehabilitation of international commerce was the way out of the Great Depression and the key to maintaining world peace.

Tariffs, which had long been one of the most fervent issues in US Congressional politics, always tended to be raised during recessions. Hull was determined to change this Congressional protectionist policy via the Democratic majority.<sup>18</sup> He took a leading role in the enactment of the Reciprocal Trade Agreements Act of 1934, which enabled the executive branch to negotiate and conclude bilateral trade agreements as well as adjust tariff rates within 50% of present rates in order to encourage reciprocal tariff reduction through bilateral negotiations.<sup>19</sup>

Reciprocal trade policy, however, was not unanimously supported within the FDR administration and was opposed by such agencies as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and its first administrator George N. Peek, who later became special adviser to FDR on foreign trade. Opponents took more a nationalist approach and wanted protective high tariffs to support domestic agricultural prices.<sup>20</sup> FDR himself, while supporting "in pure theory" the ideals of Hull's multilateral approach, thought "every once in a while we have to modify principles to meet a hard and disagreeable fact," such as the Japanese penetration into the cotton goods market in the Philippines, which resulted in gentleman's agreement between two countries.<sup>21</sup> Reciprocal trade agreements themselves often contradicted the ideals of free trade. The first agreement concluded with Cuba in August 1934 gave discriminative tariff preference to Cuban sugar, and other early agreements concluded with Latin American countries also worked to insure US economic influence in the western hemisphere.

While taking such realistic approaches in their trade agreements negotiations, Hull and the State Department did not abandon their original intention to conclude agreements with European powers for the purpose of removing tariff and other trade barriers to their homelands and colonies. In this sense the agreement with Canada (November 1935), which belonged to British Empire, was significant, as were the agreements with the Netherlands (December 1935) and France (May 1936), which were extended to include their respective colonies. The next and the most significant task for the State Department was its

negotiations with the United Kingdom, which had built a shield of tariffs around the British Empire via the Ottawa Agreement of 1932. The bilateral negotiations took long and winding road through a triple agreement including Canada in 1938 and finally resulted in the UK-US financial agreement of 1945 in which the UK accepted the principles of free trade in exchange for the generous financial aid which it so desperately needed to rebuild its postwar economy. Throughout the process, it was necessary for the US government to handle its commercial policy cautiously in order to avoid becoming an object of criticism from other powers, such as the UK.

Philippine-US talks on the revisions of the T-M Act coincided with the initial stage of UK-US negotiations on a reciprocal trade agreement. The former talks began in February 1937 and concluded in May 1938, while the latter proceeded into the preparation stages from the end of 1936, then to formal negotiations in January 1938, which resulted in the triple trade agreement between the US, Canada, and the UK signed in November that year.

In addition to this coincidence, ICPA Chairperson Sayre, as an assistant secretary, was in charge of reciprocal trade agreement programs and was assigned as chairperson of the Interdepartmental Executive Committee on Commercial Policy. This former Harvard Law School professor, who had been married to President Wilson's daughter and lived in the White House, was naturally an advocate of Hull's internationalism and devoted himself to promoting reciprocal trade agreements.<sup>22</sup> Sayre's appointment as chairperson of the ICPA meant that the T-M Act revision problem was regarded in the State Department as chiefly related to reciprocal trade agreement affairs.

### ***Relevant Matters (2): Far Eastern Affairs***

In terms of jurisdiction, however, Philippine affairs were the responsibility of FE, which had very different approach to US-Philippine policy in accordance with Far Eastern policy. Throughout the Stimson and Hull era of the State Department, FE was staffed with "China corps"<sup>23</sup> as it called itself. Stanley K. Hornbeck, who played a leading role as the chief of FE (1928-37) and a political advisor to the Secretary (1938-44),<sup>24</sup> Joseph E. Jacobs, who was assigned as the first chief of the Office of Philippine Affairs,<sup>25</sup> and John V. A. MacMurray, who conducted the Philippine-US talks on the T-M Act revisions as the chairperson of the Joint Preparatory Committee on Philippine Affairs (hereafter JPCPA),<sup>26</sup> were all senior diplomats who worked on China affairs.

Throughout his career, Hornbeck, the leading figure of "China corps," left innumerable memoranda on US Far Eastern policy, which are now open to available at the Hoover Institution Archives. These documents show that Hornbeck inherited the Stimson doctrine of non recognizing Japanese territorial aggression due to its violation of international law and faithfully believed in the principles of an open door, territorially integral, sovereign China. Nevertheless he understood that the present situation, which was determined by the isolationist tendencies strengthened by the Great Depression mentality, did not allow the US government to practice "positive" diplomacy. Hornbeck therefore restrained himself and checked propositions by hard-liners against Japan until he became confident of US naval superiority in 1940 and revealed himself as a bold supporter of "power diplomacy" toward Japan.

During the mid-1930s when the Philippine-US talks were about to get started, FE was still circumspect about its Japanese policy and avoided over-reacting to the Amai doctrine of April 1934, which declared that because Japan carried special responsibility for the maintenance of peace in East Asia, it did not always agree with the views of other nations in respect to Japan's aggression in China. However, when Ambassador Saito Hiroshi, impressed by "friendly" nature of the US government's moderate response to the Amai doctrine, confidently approached Hull to propose a US-Japan joint declaration of a policy which would mutually recognize that "the US in the eastern Pacific regions and Japan in the western Pacific regions are principal stabilizing factors," Hull decidedly rejected the idea, because for the US to agree to any provision as Saito desired would mean "giving our blessing" to Japan's conquest of China.<sup>27</sup>

Konoye Fumimaro, who visited Washington DC just after this exchange of opinions, observed that "Hornbeck was highly respected in various circles as far as Far Eastern affairs are concerned" and speculated that Ambassador Saito's proposal "must have been destroyed by Hornbeck and others."<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, Hornbeck, in a memorandum written in May, stressed that it was essential to develop America's naval power since "Japanese speak and understand the language of force... the soundest course for us lies on the line of possessing naval strength such that the Japanese will not dare to take the risk of resort to force against us."<sup>29</sup>

In sum, "Hornbeck and others" at the State Department, while practicing self-restraint but unyielding diplomacy, were expecting conditions which would enable "power diplomacy" toward Japan to be realized. Their views on Philippine affairs were closely connected with this stance. Hornbeck laid out his ideas concerning Philippine affairs in a long (eleven-page) memorandum in March 1935. Here he emphasized that in regard to the Philippine question, it is necessary to consider and come to definite conclusions about "our foreign policy as a whole and our Far Eastern practices and intention in particular" in which such ideas, he continues, as "open door" and protection of "sovereign rights" in China "have prevailed and will for a long time to come prevail in the general thought of the American people."<sup>30</sup>

In March 1936 FE was urged to create an office to deal specifically with Philippine affairs in preparation for the coming talks on revising the T-M Act. Despite his reluctance to take responsibility in a matter for which the prospect of satisfactory constructive achievement is "far from promising," Hornbeck agreed to set up such an office because it was "perfectly clear that the question of the Philippines is a problem of Far Eastern relations and must have the attention of the Far Eastern Division." At the beginning Hornbeck suggested that the head of the office be a person with experience "both in research and in administration" and thus recommended Joseph R. Hayden, a former vice-governor and professor of the University of Michigan, who undoubtedly was one of the "best-informed and most-concerned" Americans about Philippine affairs. However, Hayden was not chosen because he was a Republican. Instead, Joseph Jacobs was finally assigned to the post; and on December 12, 1936 the Office of Philippine Affairs was formally created.<sup>31</sup> Jacobs, in contrast to other "well-informed and concerned" figures, let his appointment allowed FE to continue to reflect its own Far Eastern concerns in Philippine policy.



### ***Debates: "Neutralization of the Pacific" and the Philippine Problem***

While the Office of Philippine Affairs was being created, FDR surprised FE by his sudden proposal regarding neutralization of the islands of the Pacific at the cabinet meeting of November 16, 1936. On that occasion FDR suggested a possible agreement for the disarmament of practically everything in the Pacific except Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and Singapore. This would leave the Philippines, Shanghai, Hong Kong, the Dutch east Indies, British North Borneo, and other important places neutralized. FDR went as far as to say he would be willing to disarm so far as American Samoa as well as except from fortifications that portion of Alaska nearest Japan. Toward the end of January, the President spoke about the "possibility of a neutralization policy of the Pacific on the part of the Great Powers" on a couple of occasions.<sup>32</sup>

Behind this proposal were two concerns. One was related to anxiety which had arisen over the loss of consensus between great powers regarding fortification in the western Pacific region provided under Article 19 of the Washington Naval Treaty, which would lose its effect due to Japan's notification of nullification. In respect to this matter, the UK had already sounded out both US and Japan's opinions regarding possibilities of a tri-nation agreement to extend Article 19; however, both governments were negative about such a proposal. FDR's second and equally important concern was the pending neutralization of the Philippine Islands directed by Section 11 of the T-M Act, which in his opinion "might be referred to a general conference on Far Eastern affairs."<sup>33</sup> A few days after this meeting, FDR directed the State Department to prepare a memorandum on "the Neutralization of the Islands of the Pacific." From the end of December 1936 to February 1937 numerous memoranda were drafted by Hornbeck and others at FE, like Maxwell Hamilton, Deputy Chief of FE, who completed "Draft Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State on the Neutralization of the Islands of the Pacific," dated February 16, 1937 for submission to FDR.

FE was absolutely opposed to FDR's idea of Pacific neutralization. A memorandum dated December 30, 1936 undersigned by Hornbeck and Jacobs expressed that "we both feel, and the whole officer personnel of the Far Eastern Division feels" that it would be premature to take any steps at this time toward approaching other governments on the subject of neutralization of the Philippine Islands or on the broader subject of a general conference on Far Eastern matters.<sup>34</sup>

In the memorandum written the day after Hornbeck expressed his opinion that if a new conference to consider questions of naval limitations and/or the Pacific and the Far East were held at this time, "either large and unwarranted concessions would have to be made to Japan or the conference would achieve nothing" except emphasizing existing conflict over concepts and the objections being made by Japan and other powers.<sup>35</sup> Another memorandum drafted by Hornbeck on the same date further stated his ideas as follows:

In relations with Japan, the two most powerful diplomatic weapons which the United States possesses today are the fact that, free to do either or both, the United States is easily capable of building a Navy greater than any that Japan could possibly afford and is easily capable of building fortifications and naval

bases on soil over which we at present possess sovereignty which, if built, would tend greatly to restrict Japan's activities in the field of imperialistic expansion in the Far East.<sup>36</sup>

For Hornbeck, the fact that the US had the right to decide whether or not they would build naval bases was "an important weapon in our diplomatic arsenal."<sup>37</sup>

On the other hand, in the memorandum titled as "Question of Retention by the United States of a Naval Base in the Philippine Islands" dated January 8, 1937, Hornbeck asserted that in military terms "we should not make it our policy to maintain a naval base in the Philippine Islands," because it would be a liability to have such a military outpost at a territorial point likely to be attacked by an enemy (i.e., Japan), unless a line of communications could be constantly maintained. If a war began, Japan would surely attack the base and might occupy and use it against any American counterattack, thus the base would be serving the purpose of the enemy from its inception. What Hornbeck wanted was not a creation and maintenance of a naval base *per se*, but rather to avoid making any commitment that the US never would create and maintain a naval base in the Philippines without "something very substantial in return."<sup>38</sup>

The State Department's memorandum was drafted after these preparatory drafts. Following the above discussion, it concluded that the possibility of any international neutralization agreement, any treaty, no matter with whom (including Japan), with regard to any aspect of the Pacific area at that particular moment, was not a very good idea from the standpoint of the US. The memorandum quoted paragraphs from Hornbeck's memorandum dated December 31, 1936 indicating the possibility of building a naval base in the Philippines as a powerful "diplomatic weapon" and concluding again with a reference to the pending neutralization of the Philippine Islands as an important matter which was relevant to the whole Pacific neutralization problem.<sup>39</sup>

On reading this memorandum, FDR responded with a note dated March 1, saying, "it does not fire one's imagination in favor of neutralization of the islands of the Pacific" and "the whole tenor of the argument" (i.e., that the proposal is merely idealistic) was "an argument of defeatism." FDR asked Hull to let him talk "with the author of this" and FE prepared for a talk with the President by contacting Joseph C. Grew, the Ambassador to Japan, and Norman H. Davis, former Ambassador to the UK, both of whom agreed with FE's stand that it was not the appropriate time for the US to negotiate with Japan on the neutralization of the islands of the Pacific. No discussions were held after all between FE and FDR.

While FDR's proposal was short lived, it did not die out immediately. In May, Joseph Lyons, the Australian prime minister, made a speech advocating a non-aggression treaty among the countries of the Pacific, which was endorsed by the USSR and even drew the interest of the Chinese government when the Konoye cabinet was formed in Japan. However, the proposal would be dead by July when gunfire at Marco Polo Bridge finally plunged China and Japan into total war.<sup>40</sup>

### ***The ICPA Memorandum of February 1937***

On February 19, 1937, just after the State Department memorandum on the Pacific neutralization

problem was submitted to FDR, the ICPA approved another memorandum regarding "Various Problems concerning the Relations between the United States and the Philippine Islands" (hereafter the ICPA memorandum), which had been drafted for Quezon's visit to Washington DC and the beginning of the Philippine-US talks on revising the T-M Act. Let us now see how reciprocal trade policy and Far Eastern problems were reflected in this memorandum.<sup>41</sup>

The opening section of the ICPA memorandum stipulates "complete political independence on July 4, 1946" as the basis for its conclusions and recommendations, though the ICPA was aware of opinions that the US should accelerate/postpone independence. Then it recommends that "discontinuance of preferential trade relations" should be the policy taken by the US government, stating,

The continuance of preferential trade relations with the Philippines after independence would be out of harmony with the general commercial policy of the United States, *an exception to which is made only in the case of Cuba*. Though there are those who contend that the US is per se obliged to make a similar exception for the Philippines, the Committee does not share that view (*italic added*).

It further states that the US might find it desirable to strengthen the most-favored-nation principle by abandoning in its commercial policy "all exceptions to the application of this principle." The ability of the government to attain this objective would be greatly impaired "if the decision were now reached to continue indefinitely preferential trade relations with the Philippine Islands."

The memorandum then adds other political as well as economic considerations, which would make it undesirable to continue preferential trade relations indefinitely. One important reason for this was that granting the same degree of tariff preference as Cuba would not save such Philippine export industries as sugar, because of their inability to compete with Cuban as well as other foreign suppliers enjoying the same degree of preference. On the other hand it would be impossible to give larger concessions to the Philippines after independence because of expected vigorous opposition from domestic as well as Cuban and other foreign interests.<sup>42</sup>

We should note here that the memorandum relates this tariff preference matter to establishing neutrality in the Philippines, in the sense that retaining preferential trade relations indefinitely might "easily prejudice the chances" of neutralization, since interested powers in the Far East would hesitate to enter into a neutralization treaty as long as the US continued such relations with the Philippines that might be criticized as *de facto* colonial. The memorandum points out several other reasons such as substantial fiscal losses caused by duty-free imports from the Philippines and fear of Congressional reaction. The expected reduction of Filipino purchasing power for American products caused by discontinuing preferential trade relations is mentioned as well. It would not change its conclusions, the memorandum adds, thus making it clear that even US commercial interests in exports and investments to the Philippines should be subject to the broader objectives of a reciprocal trade policy.

This did not mean, however, that all the trade preferences should be abolished concurrent with

independence. In the following section titled "Necessity of Economic Adjustment," the memorandum admits that the US is "largely responsible for the situation which exists in the Philippines today" and, therefore, should assist in bringing about economic adjustment in the Philippines. Using data from US Tariff Commission studies regarding Philippine-US trade relations, it confirmed that "orderly adjustment of the Philippine economy will be exceedingly difficult, if not possible, under existing arrangements," and proposed that the US and the Philippine governments should appoint a joint commission of experts to prepare a program of adjustment for the Philippine economy, including changing the trade provisions of the T-M Act to minimize "the stresses necessarily accompanying the economic transition," and finding ways to implement these adjustments.<sup>43</sup> This recommendation resulted in the formation of the JPCPA in April 1937.

While reciprocal trade concerns predominate in these sections of the ICPA memorandum, the last section titled "Neutralization of the Philippine Islands" obviously represents FE's views which not only differed from, but seem to conflict with concerns expressed in the earlier sections. Following the discussion contained in the memorandum submitted to FDR a few days earlier, this section states that "it would be preferable not to approach the powers concerned" regarding a possible neutralization treaty unless a decision could be reached within the US government as to whether or not to retain naval reservations and fueling stations after 1946. Furthermore, if the Islands were not to be neutralized, the overall US policy vis-à-vis the Philippines and the Far East might have to be re-oriented, and changes might also be required in recommendations with respect to trade relations between the two countries and to plans for economic adjustments in the Islands.

In this section FE is apparently insisting on keeping its option to nullify the trade policy laid out in the previous sections pending later developments in US Far Eastern policy. It does not necessarily mean, however, that FE was opposed. Rather, FE believed that naval bases and the neutrality issues should *not* be decided on immediately by *not* declaring any policy, and this was the most effective way for the US to utilize the Philippines as a powerful "diplomatic weapon." As long as the neutrality question did not reach a decision, FE had no reason to disturb the trade policy being promoted by Sayre as well as Secretary Hull.

Furthermore, FE did not want to do anything that might be interpreted as provocative, shown in following paragraphs warning that the US government should be in position to show that "the Philippine Government is solely responsible for the defense program" and should "discourage the Philippine authorities from carrying out a military program of such character as might be open to misinterpretation on the part of powers with interests in the Far East." If the former part of the section could be characterized as representing the unyielding side of US Far Eastern policy, the latter part may be portrayed as showing its self-restrained side.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the two relevant concerns, reciprocal trade and Far Eastern politics, did not collide for the moment, and the ICPA memorandum came to contain both alternatives for colonial policy: i.e., abandonment or retention of the Philippines. The former option, represented by Sayre, who gave priority to reciprocal trade policy, was a refusal to treat the Philippines as another Cuba and allow only

provisional extensions of preference, in order to give the Philippines ample opportunity to free itself from economic dependence on the US market. Behind this commendable attitude of a suzerain encouraging its own colony to attain economic independence was the intention to cut ties with the colony as soon as practical without imposing any economic or political burdens on the US. However, this policy could be altered at any time pending developments in the Far Eastern situation, and it was still possible to retain the Philippines as an American base in the Far East.

### ***Later Developments: Ambiguous Philippine Policy***

The drawing up of the ICPA memorandum in February 1937 was, of course, only the beginning of the twists and turns that the FDR administration would maneuver through on Philippines affairs in the years to come. This maneuvering involved two elements. First, it was Congress that had the final say in this matter, because the central problem was how to revise a piece of a Congressional legislation, which, of course, could be realized only with Congress' consent. Secondly, the administration's considerations toward its Philippine policy were swayed by two concerns as mentioned above --- reciprocal trade and Far Eastern politics--- which could possibly conflict with each other, but would not in actuality, because FE, representing Far Eastern policy, did not want the administrations' diplomacy in the region to be restrained by any declaration of policy regarding the Philippine question, at least for the time being. On the Philippine side, the landed elite politicians who monopolized the Commonwealth Government wanted national political independence to be accompanied by a continuation of existing special economic ties with the US, as well as maintenance of their country's security from possible Japanese aggression. Later developments in Philippine-US relations as the Pacific War drew near could be described as a process resulting in indecision and omission over the entanglement of these elements.

Given the space remaining, it would be impossible to touch upon all aspects of this "entanglement" in the present paper, but I would like to sum up the political process up to the passage of the revised Independence Act of 1939, the so-called Economic Adjustment Act. After the ICPA memorandum was submitted to FDR who then met with Quezon the following week, the Joint Preparatory Committee on Philippine Affairs (hereafter JPCPA) was organized in April 1937 in order to deliberate revisions of the T-M Act. This committee functioned as not only a study forum but also as a negotiating table between the two governments until it drafted its final recommendations in May 1938.

Throughout its deliberations the US government made clear that it would continue to pressure the Philippines to make "economic adjustments" in accordance with the coming abolition of preferential treatment. In contrast, the Commonwealth government believed that "economic adjustment" meant avoiding economic chaos by revising the trade provisions in the T-M Act, which threatened to ruin export industries like sugar. For this reason, it was necessary that preferential treatment not be abolished following the granting of independence.

Such differences between the two countries in the interpretation of what "economic adjustment" was meant to do resulted in Independence Act negotiations dominated by bargaining over the extent and duration of preferential treatment after independence was granted. In opposition to the Quezon

administration, which hoped for the continuation of duty-free trade long after independence, the State Department, which had assumed leadership in the negotiations for the US side, refused to budge on the position that all preferential treatment would end at the earliest practical date after independence. An agreement was finally reached between the two parties in May 1938. Beginning in 1941 general export taxes would be raised by 5% per year, and from the time of independence tariffs rates would be raised by the same yearly 5% as the extent of preferential treatment was gradually reduced. Both parties signed a JPCPA report that recommended tariffs reach their 100% levels by 1960, at which time preferential treatment would be totally abolished.<sup>45</sup>

The JPCPA Report was thus finally signed after a very rough voyage through the negotiating process, but again hit stormy waters in 1939 when Independence Act revisions based on the Report were introduced for deliberation in Congress. They were introduced within a tense international atmosphere and gridlock between President Roosevelt and Congressional isolationists over how to revise the Neutrality Act. Calling the Philippines America's "heel of Achilles" in the international disputes the country was then involved in, the isolationists, who wanted to rid themselves of the Philippines as soon as possible, argued that if the proposal of the bill already established an "Economic Adjustment" program that would abolish all preferential treatment by 1960, why was it necessary to wait until 1946 to grant national independence? The administration, led by the FE responded that from the viewpoint of the Philippines as a "diplomatic weapon" against the Japanese,<sup>46</sup> moving up (or postponing) the date for Philippine independence called for by the TM Act (July 4th, 1946) could not but have serious ramifications for America's diplomatic efforts in the region. Finally, in August 1939, after the post-independence tariff program was scrapped in exchange for no change in the date on which independence was to be granted, the 1939 Economic Adjustment Act, containing only minor revisions of the original T-M Act, was passed by Congress and signed by FDR on August 9.

The enactment of the Economic Adjustment Act almost coincided with the outbreak of the War in Europe in September 1939, which would inevitably alter the situation and lend more tension to already strained Philippine-US relations. The interaction of the three elements of Congressional isolationism, reciprocal trade, and Far Eastern policy was substantially changed and swayed by developments in the War. Francis Sayre's appointment as U.S. High Commissioner to the Philippine Islands, which also happened to coincide with the outbreak of the War, also affected the situation. Sayre continued to act on the belief that promoting the economic decolonization of US-Philippine relations was in accord with American interests in pursuit of a reciprocal trade policy. This type of behavior unavoidably strained relations with President Quezon, who lamented, "unfortunately, we have a High Commissioner .... who seems to be lacking of that sympathy.... in the consideration of our economic problems."<sup>47</sup> However, Sayre's standpoint on these matters started to depart more and more from the official US government position from the time he himself was appointed High Commissioner in September 1939. After the outbreak of the War in Europe, the Philippines grew more in importance than ever before in its role as a strategic base in the Far East. For this reason the US government disagreed with Sayre's attempt to give priority to implementation of the "economic adjustment" program, in favor of making the maintenance of

close cooperation by the Quezon administration its top priority.

This change of situation, however, did not provide a way out of the quandary characterizing Philippine-US relations before the outbreak of the Pacific War. The Philippines continued to be placed in a dangerous "twilight zone" between abandonment and retention, independence and dependence. The Presidential order to integrate the Armed Forces of the Philippines into the US Army as the U.S. Army Forces in the Far East (hereafter USAFFE) in July 1941 was certainly an important decision which marked a substantial change of policy from the utilizing the Philippines as merely a diplomatic weapon to declaring the Islands as an undeniable US military base against possible Japanese southward aggression. However, this decision was ineffective, not only in the sense that it could not prevent Japan from taking "the risk of resort to force against" the US, but also because it was not enough to provide defense of the Philippine Islands against Japanese attack after Pearl Harbor.

On February 8, 1942, five weeks after Manila was occupied by the Japanese Army, a top-secret message was sent to FDR from Quezon, who had been evacuated to Corregidor Island with Douglas MacArthur, who had been appointed USAFFE Commander in July 1941. The message stated that while Quezon firmly believed in ultimate US victory, he questioned "Shall we sacrifice our country and our people in a hopeless fight?... you do not need to sacrifice the people of the Philippines to win this war." He then proposed that, to preserve the country and people from further destruction, the US immediately grant the complete and absolute independence and the Philippines be at once neutralized, and all occupying troops, both American and Japanese be withdrawn by mutual agreement with the Philippine Government.<sup>48</sup> The message did not unequivocally criticize previous US policy, but just sending the message was of itself was an act of denunciation of US policy, which finally brought the havoc of war down on the defenseless Philippines. This message, in the author's opinion, signifies a catastrophe of Philippine-US colonial relations. It is quite another story how after the War the two countries relations would "revive" and continue their special *de facto* colonialties long after independence which was finally granted, as stipulated in the T-M Act, on July 4, 1946.

### **Conclusion**

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that the perpetrator against the Philippines in the Pacific War was none other than Japan. However, given the above facts, one can not help wonder if the US had given the Philippines complete independence before the War, would Japan have skipped over this sovereign nation in its military conquest of Southeast Asia? If the US, which had the military potential to defeat Japan ultimately under any conditions, had categorically publicized its will and decidedly prepared the Islands for Japanese aggression, might not the war have taken a different course, lessening the horror that ravaged the Philippines? While these are only "counterfactual" questions, they still lead one to the conclusion that the ambiguous Philippine policy of the FDR administration was at least partly responsible for what happened to the Islands during the conflict in the Pacific.

In this paper I have attempted to clarify what exactly caused policy ambiguity, in arguing that it was being handled by "under-informed and unconcerned" personnel, who consistently related the matters as

hand to questions having little to do with the Philippines *per se*, resulting in policy decisions that often contradicted each other and were endlessly postponed. By postponement in this case, I do not mean that Philippine affairs were perceived as "unimportant" for US national interests; rather they may have been too "important" to be separated from other questions. In any case, though, it is quite obvious that Philippine affairs was not interpreted as the "core" of US national interests, but merely a "peripheral" matter.

What should be said in all fairness about the decision makers involved is that, despite being "under-informed and unconcerned," they were sincere in their actions and had high ideals, from their respective points of view, concerning such matters as the realization of world peace through liberalized international commerce and opposition to Japan's imperial aggression. What I have tried to relate in the present paper, however, is a story of a super power's diplomacy conducted by "sincere" people seeking high ideals they believe should be shared by the all, but sacrificing in their quest the interests of a "minor" country and the welfare of its people.

President Quezon, who was quoted above lamenting High Commissioner Sayre's unsympathetic attitudes, also expressed his dislike of FE Chief Stanley Hornbeck on another occasion, calling him "one of those imperialists."<sup>49</sup> This label was of course contrary to the ideals of Hornbeck, the China expert who was an unequivocal, outspoken opponent of Japan's imperialist policies and wholeheartedly supported Chinese struggle against Japan's imperialist aggression. One cannot deny, however, that Quezon's criticism of this American diplomat contained a bit of truth, even if it was colored by the economic interests of the Filipino landed elite, since Hornbeck, a bona fide member of the "under-informed and unconcerned," was certainly proceeding in "imperialist" fashion from the standpoint of a political leader whose country was being utilized as a "diplomatic weapon" that would eventually be sacrificed in the game of international politics.

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## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *US Congressional Records* 72-2 (1932): 433.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*: 266.

<sup>3</sup> On background to Congressional politics regarding Philippine independence question, see Beard 1934; Friend 1965; Churchill 1983.

<sup>4</sup> On Philippine colonial economy under the US rule, see Jenkins 1954; Nagano 1986; Giesecke 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Churchill 1983: 290.

<sup>6</sup> On Stimson and the Philippine affairs, see Stimson and Bundy 1947; Current 1954; Smith 1970; Hodgson 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Henry L. Stimson to Patrick J. Hurley, October 29, 1931. Box 343, Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace (Hereafter SKH, HIWRP).

<sup>8</sup> *US Congressional Records* 73-2 (1934): 3580.

<sup>9</sup> Stimson Diary, October 27, 1931; February 10, 1932; February 14, 1932.

<sup>10</sup> Quezon 1946: 151.

<sup>11</sup> On policy making style of the FDR administration, see Miyasato 1981: 52-57.

<sup>12</sup> On administrative history of US colonial offices with respect to the Philippines, see Cruz 1971.

<sup>13</sup> Hull to FDR, January 15, 1935. Box 16, White House Official Files 400, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library.

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- <sup>14</sup> Departmental Order No.660, December 12, 1936. Box 344, SKH, HIWRP.
- <sup>15</sup> Harrison 1974: 136-137.
- <sup>16</sup> "Department of State Press Release," December 28, 1936. Entry 733, JPCPA records, RG59, U.S. National Archives (Hereafter #733 JPCPA/RG59, USNA).
- <sup>17</sup> Hull's memoir only casually mentioned that he had been always against imperialism and colonial expansionism and supported Philippine independence. Hull 1948: 278, 1065, 1238.
- <sup>18</sup> Pratt 1964, Vol.12: 1-12.
- <sup>19</sup> On reciprocal trade policy, see Sayre 1939; Gardner 1964: 24-46; Pratt 1964, Vol.12: 107-138; Yui 1985: 12-47; Makino 1993: 19-47.
- <sup>20</sup> Gardner 1964: 41-44; Pratt 1964, Vol.12: 115-119.
- <sup>21</sup> Dallek 1979: 92.
- <sup>22</sup> Francis B. Sayre (1885-1972) taught at Harvard University from 1919 to 1934; foreign affairs advisor to the Siamese government from 1923 to 1925; assistant secretary of state from 1933 to 1939; high commissioner to the Philippines from 1939 to 1942. See Sayre 1957; Dufault 1972.
- <sup>23</sup> Stanley K. Hornbeck to Cordell Hull, January 14, 1937. Box 344, SKH, HIWRP.
- <sup>24</sup> Stanley K. Hornbeck (1883-1966) taught at various colleges in China from 1909 to 1913; lecturer at Williams College from 1922 to 1924; at Harvard University from 1924 to 1927; chief of FE of the State Department from 1928 to 1937; special advisor on political affairs to the secretary of state from 1938 to 1944; US ambassador to the Netherlands from 1944 to 1947. Shavit (ed.) 1990: 243-244. See Doenecke 1981; Hu 1995.
- <sup>25</sup> Joseph E. Jacobs(1893-1971) was a student interpreter in Peking, China, from 1915 to 1918; began his diplomatic career as vice consul, consul in various places in China from 1918 to 1930; served in FE from 1940 to 1945; representative to Albania from 1945 to 1946; political advisor to the commanding general in Korea in 1947 to 1948; later ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Poland. Shavit (ed.) 1990: 263.
- <sup>26</sup> John V.A. MacMurray (1881-1960) entered the State Department in 1908; served in Peking from 1913 to 1917 and Japan from 1917 to 1919; chief of FE from 1919 to 1924; assistant secretary of state in 1924 to 1925; US minister to China from 1925 to 1928; minister to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania from 1933 to 1936; ambassador to Turkey from 1936 to 1941; special assistant to the secretary of state from 1942 to 1944. *Ibid.*, 327-328.
- <sup>27</sup> Borg 1964: 92-99.
- <sup>28</sup> Kido 1966: 148-153.
- <sup>29</sup> Borg 1964: 118.
- <sup>30</sup> Hornbeck, "The Philippine Problem," March 5, 1935. Box 343, SKH, HIWRP.
- <sup>31</sup> Hornbeck to William Phillips, March 24; Memorandum for FE, July 10; Departmental Order No.660, December 12, 1936. Box 344, SKH, HIWRP.
- <sup>32</sup> Ickes Diary, November 20, 1936 quoted in Borg 1964: 244.
- <sup>33</sup> Memorandum by Hornbeck and Jacobs, December 30, 1936. Box 343, SKH, HIWRP.
- <sup>34</sup> Hornbeck and Jacobs, "Question of Proposing Neutralization of the Philippine Islands.....," December 30, 1936, Box 343, SKH, HIWRP.
- <sup>35</sup> Hornbeck, "Question of Proposing that there be held a Conference on Questions of the Far East and the Pacific," December 31, 1936, *Ibid.*
- <sup>36</sup> Hornbeck, "Naval Limitation(?) and Contemporary Diplomatic Effectiveness," December 31, 1936, *Ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> Hornbeck, "Reference, Section 10 and 11 of the Act 'To provide for the complete independence of the Philippine Islands, etc. ....'," January 5, 1936. *Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup> Hornbeck, "Question of Retention by the United States of a Naval Base in the Philippine Islands," January 8, 1937. *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> "Draft Memorandum Prepared in the Department of State on the Neutralization of the Islands of the Pacific," February 16, 1937. *FRUS* 1937, III: 954-971.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 971-990.
- <sup>41</sup> Memorandum of the ICPA in Regard to Various Problems Concerning the Relations between the United States and the Philippine Islands, February 19, 1937. #733 JPCPA/RG59, USNA.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-6.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-12.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.

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<sup>45</sup> On the records of the JPCPA: JPCPA, *Minutes and Memoranda*, Vol.I & II (1938); JPCPA, *Report of May 20, 1938*, Vol.I: Report and Recommendations; Vol.II: Hearings held before the Committee; Vol.III: Briefs Submitted to the Committee, Group I: Briefs Submitted in Printed Form; Group II: Briefs in Submitted in Typewritten Form (Washington DC: USGPO, 1938).

<sup>46</sup> Memorandum by Stanley K. Hornbeck, "Naval Limitation(?) and Contemporary Diplomatic Effectiveness," December 31, 1936, Box 343, SKH, HIWRP.

<sup>47</sup> Quezon to Elizalde, April 4, 1941. Box 112, General Correspondence File, Manuel Quezon Papers, National Library, Manila.

<sup>48</sup> *FRUS* 1942, I: 894-895.

<sup>49</sup> Harrison 1974: 136.