

THE PHILIPPINES

OUR POLICY AND OUR WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES¹

BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

AS a sequel to the war with Spain we found ourselves in possession of the Philippines under circumstances which rendered it necessary to subdue a formidable insurrection which made it impossible for us with honour or with regard to the welfare of the islands to withdraw therefrom. The occasion was seized by the opponents of the President for trying to raise a new issue, on which they hoped they might be more successful than on the old. The clamour raised against him was joined in not only by many honest men who were led astray by a mistaken view or imperfect knowledge of the facts, but by all who feared effort, who shrank from the rough work of endeavour. The campaign of 1900 had to be fought largely upon the new issue thus raised. President McKinley met it squarely. Two years and eight months ago, before his second nomination, he spoke as follows:

¹Compiled from his Presidential speeches and addresses.

THE PHILIPPINES

“We believe that the century of free government which the American people have enjoyed has not rendered them irresolute and faithless, but has fitted them for the great task of lifting up and assisting to better conditions and larger liberty those distant peoples who through the issue of battle have become our wards. Let us fear not. There is no occasion for faint hearts, no excuse for regrets. Nations do not grow in strength, the cause of liberty and law is not advanced by the doing of easy things. The harder the task the greater will be the result, the benefit, and the honour. To doubt our power to accomplish it is to lose faith in the soundness and strength of our popular institutions. . . . We have the new care and cannot shift it. And, breaking up the camp of ease and isolation, let us bravely and hopefully and soberly continue the march of faithful service, and falter not until the work is done. . . . The burden is our opportunity. The opportunity is greater than the burden.”

There spoke the man who preached the gospel of hope as well as the gospel of duty, and on the issue thus fairly drawn between those who said we would do our new work well and triumphantly and those who said we would fail lamentably in the effort, the contest was joined. We won. And now I ask you, two years after the victory, to look across the seas and judge for yourselves whether or not the promise has been kept. The prophets of disaster have seen their predictions so completely falsified by the event

OUR POLICY AND WORK

that it is actually difficult to arouse even a passing interest in their failure. To answer them now, to review their attack on our army, is of merely academic interest. They played their brief part of obstruction and clamour; they said their say; and the current of our life went over them and they sank under it as did their predecessors who, thirty-six years before, had declared that another and greater war was a failure, that another and greater struggle for true liberty was only a contest for subjugation in which the United States could never succeed. The insurrection among the Filipinos has been absolutely quelled. The war has been brought to an end sooner than even the most sanguine of us dared to hope. The world has not in recent years seen any military task done with more soldierly energy and ability; and done, moreover, in a spirit of great humanity. The strain on the army was terrible, for the conditions of climate and soil made their work harassing to an extraordinary degree, and the foes in the field were treacherous and cruel, not merely toward our men, but toward the great multitude of peaceful islanders who welcomed our rule. Under the strain of well-nigh intolerable provocation there were shameful instances, as must happen in all wars, where the soldiers forgot themselves, and retaliated evil for evil. There were one hundred thousand of our men in the Philippines, a hundred thousand hired for a small sum a month apiece, put there under conditions that strained their nerves to the breaking point, and some of the hundred thousand

THE PHILIPPINES

did what they ought not to have done. But out of a hundred thousand men at home, have all been faultless? Every effort has been made to detect such cases, to punish the offenders, and to prevent any recurrence of the deed. It is a cruel injustice to the gallant men who fought so well in the Philippines not to recognise that these instances were exceptional, and that the American troops who served in the far-off tropic islands deserve praise the same in kind that has always been given to those who have well and valiantly fought for the honour of our common flag and common country. The work of civil administration has kept pace with the work of military administration, and when on July 4th, 1903, amnesty and peace were declared throughout the islands the civil government assumed the complete control. Peace and order now prevail and a greater measure of prosperity and of happiness than the Filipinos have ever hitherto known in all their dark and checkered history; and each one of them has a greater measure of liberty, a greater chance of happiness, and greater safety for his life and property than he or his forefathers have ever before known. . . .

In the Philippines, there was an insurrectionary party claiming to represent the people of the islands and putting forth their claim with a certain speciousness which deceived no small number of excellent men here at home, and which afforded to yet others a chance to arouse a factious party spirit against the President. Of course, looking back, it is now

OUR POLICY AND WORK

easy to see that it would have been both absurd and wicked to abandon the Philippine Archipelago and let the scores of different tribes — Christian, Mohammedan, and pagan, in every stage of semi-civilisation and Asiatic barbarism — turn the islands into a welter of bloody savagery, with the absolute certainty that some strong Power would have to step in and take possession. But though now it is easy enough to see that our duty was to stay in the islands, to put down the insurrection by force of arms, and then to establish freedom-giving civil government, it needed genuine statesmanship to see this and to act accordingly at the time of the first revolt. A weaker and less far-sighted man than President McKinley would have shrunk from a task very difficult in itself, and certain to furnish occasion for attack and misrepresentation no less than for honest misunderstanding. But President McKinley never flinched. He refused to consider the thought of abandoning our duty in our new possessions. While sedulously endeavouring to act with the utmost humanity toward the insurrectionists, he never faltered in the determination to put them down by force of arms, alike for the sake of our own interest and honour, and for the sake of the interest of the islanders, and particularly of the great numbers of friendly natives, including those most highly civilised, for whom abandonment by us would have meant ruin and death. Again his policy was most amply vindicated. Peace has come to the islands, together with a greater measure of individual

THE PHILIPPINES

liberty and self-government than they have ever before known. All the tasks set us as a result of the war with Spain have so far been well and honourably accomplished, and as a result this nation stands higher than ever before among the nations of mankind. . . .

It is a good thing to look back upon what has been said and compare it with the record of what has actually been done. If promises are violated, if plighted word is not kept, then those who have failed in their duty should be held up to reprobation. If, on the other hand, the promises have been substantially made good; if the achievement has kept pace and more than kept pace with the prophecy, then they who made the one and are responsible for the other are entitled of just right to claim the credit which attaches to those who serve the nation well. This credit I claim for the men who have managed so admirably the military and the civil affairs of the Philippine Islands, and for those other men who have so heartily backed them in Congress, and without whose aid and support not one thing could have been accomplished.

When President McKinley spoke, the first duty was the restoration of order; and to this end the use of the army of the United States — an army composed of regulars and volunteers alike — was necessary. To put down the insurrection and restore peace to the islands was a duty, not only to ourselves, but to the islanders also. We could not

OUR POLICY AND WORK

have abandoned the conflict without shirking this duty, without proving ourselves recreants to the memory of our forefathers. Moreover, if we had abandoned it we would have inflicted upon the Filipinos the most cruel wrong and would have doomed them to a bloody jumble of anarchy and tyranny. It seems strange, looking back, that any of our people should have failed to recognise a duty so obvious; but there was such failure, and the Government at home, the civil authorities in the Philippines, and above all our gallant army, had to do their work amid a storm of detraction. The army in especial was attacked in a way which finally did good, for in the end it aroused the hearty resentment of the great body of the American people, not against the army, but against the army's traducers. The circumstances of the war made it one of peculiar difficulty, and our soldiers were exposed to peculiar wrongs from their foes. They fought in dense tropical jungles against enemies who were very treacherous and very cruel, not only toward our own men, but toward the great numbers of friendly natives, the most peaceable and most civilised among whom eagerly welcomed our rule. . . .

As a whole, our troops showed not only signal courage and efficiency, but great humanity and the most sincere desire to promote the welfare and liberties of the islanders. In a series of exceedingly harassing and difficult campaigns they completely overthrew the enemy, reducing them finally to a

THE PHILIPPINES.

condition of mere brigandage; and wherever they conquered, they conquered only to make way for the rule of the civil government, for the introduction of law, and of liberty under the law. When, by last July, the last vestige of organised insurrection had disappeared, peace and amnesty were proclaimed.

As rapidly as the military rule was extended over the islands by the defeat of the insurgents, just so rapidly was it replaced by the civil government. At the present time the civil government is supreme and the army in the Philippines has been reduced until it is sufficient merely to provide against the recurrence of trouble. In Governor Taft and his associates we sent to the Filipinos as upright, as conscientious, and as able a group of administrators as ever any country has been blessed with having. With them and under them we have associated the best men among the Filipinos, so that the great majority of the officials, including many of the highest rank, are themselves natives of the islands. The administration is incorruptibly honest; justice is as jealously safeguarded as here at home. The government is conducted purely in the interests of the people of the islands; they are protected in their religious and civil rights; they have been given an excellent and well-administered school system, and each of them now enjoys rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" such as were never before known in all the history of the islands. . . .

The best thing that can be done in handling such

OUR POLICY AND WORK

a problem as that in the Philippine Islands, so peculiar, so delicate, so difficult, and so remote, is to put the best man possible in charge and then give him the heartiest possible support and the freest possible hand. This is what has been done with Governor Taft. There is not in this nation a higher or finer type of public servant than Governor Taft. He has rendered literally inestimable service, not only to the people of the Philippine Islands, but also to the people of the United States, by what he has done in those islands. He has been able to do it, because from the beginning he has been given absolute support by the War Department, under Secretary Root. With the cessation of organised resistance the civil government assumed its proper position of headship. The army in the Philippines is now one of the instruments through which Governor Taft does his admirable work. The civil government, of which Governor Taft is the head, is supreme, and it will do well in the future as it has in the past, because it will be backed up in the future as it has been in the past.

Remember always that in the Philippines the American Government has tried and is trying to carry out exactly what the greatest genius and most revered patriot ever known in the Philippine Islands — José Rizal — steadfastly advocated. This man, shortly before his death, in a message to his countrymen, under date of December 16, 1896, condemned unsparingly the insurrection of Aguinaldo, terminated just before our navy appeared upon the scene, and pointed out the path his people should follow to liberty and

THE PHILIPPINES

enlightenment. Speaking of the insurrection and of the pretence that Filipino independence of a wholesome character could thereby be obtained, he wrote:

“When, in spite of my advice, a movement was begun, I offered of my own accord, not only my services, but my life and even my good name to be used in any way they might believe effective in stifling the rebellion. I thought of the disaster which would follow the success of the revolution, and I deemed myself fortunate if by any sacrifice I could block the progress of such a useless calamity.

“My countrymen, I have given proof that I was one who sought liberty for our country and I still seek it. But as a first step I insisted upon the development of the people in order that, by means of education and of labour, they might acquire the proper individual character and force which would make them worthy of it. In my writings I have commended to you study and civic virtue, without which our redemption does not exist. . . . I cannot do less than condemn this absurd and savage insurrection planned behind my back, which dishonours us before the Filipinos and discredits us with those who otherwise would argue in our behalf. I abominate its cruelties and disavow any kind of connection with it, regretting with all the sorrow of my soul that these reckless men have allowed themselves to be deceived. Let them return, then, to their homes, and may God pardon those who have acted in bad faith.”

This message embodied precisely and exactly the avowed policy upon which the American Govern-

OUR POLICY AND WORK

ment has acted in the Philippines. What the patriot Rizal said with such force in speaking of the insurrection before we came to the islands applies with tenfold greater force to those who foolishly or wickedly opposed the mild and beneficent government we were instituting in the islands. The judgment of the martyred public servant, Rizal, whose birthday the Philippine people celebrate, and whom they worship as their hero and ideal, sets forth the duty of American sovereignty — a duty from which the American people will never flinch.

While we have been doing these great and beneficent works in the islands, we have yet been steadily reducing the cost at which they are done. The last Congress repealed the law for the war taxes, and the War Department has reduced the army from the maximum number of one hundred thousand allowed under the law to very nearly the minimum of sixty thousand. . . .

Taft went to the Philippines to stay there; not only forfeiting thereby the certainty of brilliant rise in his profession on the bench or at the bar here if he had stayed, but at imminent risk to his own health; because he felt that his duty as an American made him go; that, as President McKinley told me of him, he had been drafted into the service of the country and he could not honourably refuse. We have seen in consequence the Philippine Islands administered by the American official who is at the head of the Government and by his colleagues in

THE PHILIPPINES

the interest primarily of their people, and seeking to obtain for the United States, for the dominant race, that spent its blood and its treasure in making firm and stable the government of those islands, the reward that comes from the consciousness of duty well done. Under Taft, by and through his efforts, not only have peace and material well-being come to those islands to a degree never before known in their recorded history, and to a degree infinitely greater than had ever been dreamed possible by those who knew them best, but more than that, a greater measure of self-government has been given to them than is now given to any other Asiatic people under alien rule, than to any other Asiatic people under their own rulers, save Japan alone. That is an achievement of the past five years which I hold to be absolutely unparalleled in history; and when the debit and credit side of our national life is finally made up a long stroke shall be put to the credit side for what has been done in the Philippines under Taft and his associates. . . .

The Philippines are very rich tropical islands, inhabited by many varying tribes, representing widely different stages of progress toward civilisation. Our earnest effort is to help these people upward along the stony and difficult path that leads to self-government. We hope to make our administration of the islands honourable to our nation by making it of the highest benefit to the Filipinos themselves; and as an earnest of what we intend to do, we point

OUR POLICY AND WORK

to what we have done. Already a greater measure of material prosperity and of governmental honesty and efficiency has been attained in the Philippines than ever before in their history.

It is no light task for a nation to achieve the temperamental qualities without which the institutions of free government are but an empty mockery. Our people are now successfully governing themselves, because for more than a thousand years they have been slowly fitting themselves, sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, toward this end. What has taken us thirty generations to achieve, we cannot expect to see another race accomplish out of hand, especially when large portions of that race start very far behind the point which our ancestors had reached even thirty generations ago. In dealing with the Philippine people we must show both patience and strength, forbearance and steadfast resolution. Our aim is high. We do not desire to do for the islanders merely what has elsewhere been done for tropic peoples by even the best foreign governments. We hope to do for them what has never before been done for any people of the tropics — to make them fit for self-government after the fashion of the really free nations.

History may safely be challenged to show a single instance in which a masterful race such as ours, having been forced by the exigencies of war to take possession of an alien land, has behaved to its inhabitants with the disinterested zeal for their progress that our people have shown in the Philippines. To leave the

THE PHILIPPINES

islands at this time would mean that they would fall into a welter of murderous anarchy. Such desertion of duty on our part would be a crime against humanity. The character of Governor Taft and of his associates and subordinates is a proof, if such be needed, of the sincerity of our effort to give the islanders a constantly increasing measure of self-government, exactly as fast as they show themselves fit to exercise it. Since the civil government was established not an appointment has been made in the islands with any reference to considerations of political influence, or to aught else save the fitness of the man and the needs of the service.

In our anxiety for the welfare and progress of the Philippines, it may be that here and there we have gone too rapidly in giving them local self-government. It is on this side that our error, if any, has been committed. No competent observer, sincerely desirous of finding out the facts and influenced only by a desire for the welfare of the natives, can assert that we have not gone far enough. We have gone to the very verge of safety in hastening the process. To have taken a single step farther or faster in advance would have been folly and weakness, and might well have been crime. We are extremely anxious that the natives shall show the power of governing themselves. We are anxious, first for their sakes, and next, because it relieves us of a great burden. There need not be the slightest fear of our not continuing to give them all the liberty for which they are fit.

The only fear is lest in our over-anxiety we give

OUR POLICY AND WORK

them a degree of independence for which they are unfit, thereby inviting reaction and disaster. As fast as there is any reasonable hope that in a given district the people can govern themselves, self-government has been given in that district. There is not a locality fitted for self-government which has not received it. But it may well be that in certain cases it will have to be withdrawn because the inhabitants show themselves unfit to exercise it; such instances have already occurred. In other words, there is not the slightest chance of our failing to show a sufficiently humanitarian spirit. The danger comes in the opposite direction.

There are still troubles ahead in the islands. The insurrection has become an affair of local banditti and marauders, who deserve no higher regard than the brigands of portions of the Old World.

Encouragement, direct or indirect, to these *insurrectos* stands on the same footing as encouragement to hostile Indians in the days when we still had Indian wars. Exactly as our aim is to give to the Indian who remains peaceful the fullest and amplest consideration, but to have it understood that we will show no weakness if he goes on the warpath, so we must make it evident, unless we are false to our own traditions and to the demands of civilisation and humanity, that while we will do everything in our power for the Filipino who is peaceful, we will take the sternest measures with the Filipino who follows the path of the *insurrecto* and the ladrone.

The heartiest praise is due to large numbers of

THE PHILIPPINES

the natives of the islands for their steadfast loyalty. The Macabebes have been conspicuous for their courage and devotion to the flag. I recommend that the Secretary of War be empowered to take some systematic action in the way of aiding those of these men who are crippled in the service and the families of those who are killed.

The time has come when there should be additional legislation for the Philippines. Nothing better can be done for the islands than to introduce industrial enterprises. Nothing would benefit them so much as throwing them open to industrial development. The connection between idleness and mischief is proverbial, and the opportunity to do remunerative work is one of the surest preventives of war. Of course no business man will go into the Philippines unless it is to his interest to do so; and it is immensely to the interest of the islands that he should go in. It is therefore necessary that the Congress should pass laws by which the resources of the islands can be developed; so that franchises (for limited terms of years) can be granted to companies doing business in them, and every encouragement be given to the incoming of business men of every kind.

Not to permit this is to do a wrong to the Philippines. The franchises must be granted and the business permitted only under regulations which will guarantee the islands against any kind of improper exploitation. But the vast natural wealth of the islands must be developed, and the capital willing to develop it must be given the opportunity. The

OUR POLICY AND WORK

field must be thrown open to individual enterprise, which has been the real factor in the development of every region over which our flag has flown. It is urgently necessary to enact suitable laws dealing with general transportation, mining, banking, currency, homesteads, and the use and ownership of the lands and timber. These laws will give free play to industrial enterprise; and the commercial development which will surely follow will afford to the people of the islands the best proofs of the sincerity of our desire to aid them. . . .

It is important to have the Civil Service Law at home, but it is even more important to have it applied rigidly in our insular possessions. Not an office should be filled in the Philippines or Porto Rico with any regard to the man's partisan affiliations or services, with any regard to the political, social, or personal influence which he may have at his command; in short, heed should be paid to absolutely nothing save the man's own character and capacity and the needs of the service.

The administration of these islands should be as wholly free from the suspicion of partisan politics as the administration of the army and navy. All that we ask from the public servant in the Philippines or Porto Rico is that he reflect honour on his country by the way in which he makes that country's rule a benefit to the peoples who have come under it. This is all that we should ask, and we cannot afford to be content with less.

THE PHILIPPINES

The merit system is simply one method of securing honest and efficient administration of the Government; and in the long run the sole justification of any type of government lies in its proving itself honest and efficient. . . .

Taking the work of the army and the civil authorities together, it may be questioned whether anywhere else in modern times the world has seen a better example of real constructive statesmanship than our people have given in the Philippine Islands. High praise should also be given those Filipinos, in the aggregate very numerous, who have accepted the new conditions and joined with our representatives to work with hearty goodwill for the welfare of the islands. . . .

The Philippines should be knit closer to us by tariff arrangements. It would, of course, be impossible suddenly to raise the people of the islands to the high pitch of industrial prosperity and of governmental efficiency to which they will in the end by degrees attain; and the caution and moderation shown in developing them have been among the main reasons why this development has hitherto gone on so smoothly. Scrupulous care has been taken in the choice of governmental agents and the entire elimination of partisan politics from the public service. The condition of the islanders is in material things far better than ever before, while their governmental, intellectual, and moral advance has kept pace with their material advance. No one people

OUR POLICY AND WORK

ever benefited another people more than we have benefited the Filipinos by taking possession of the islands. . . .

The establishment of a naval base in the Philippines ought not to be longer postponed. Such a base is desirable in time of peace; in time of war it would be indispensable, and its lack would be ruinous. Without it our fleet would be helpless. Our naval experts are agreed that Subig Bay is the proper place for the purpose. The national interests require that the work of fortification and development of a naval station at Subig Bay be begun at an early date; for under the best conditions it is a work which will consume much time. . . .

In transmitting to the Senate and the House of Representatives the report of his trip to the Philippines in 1907, President Roosevelt said:

“It is a subject for just national gratification that such a report as this can be made. No great civilised Power has ever managed with such wisdom and disinterestedness the affairs of a people committed by the accident of war to its hands. If we had followed the advice of the misguided persons who wished us to turn the islands loose and let them suffer whatever fate might befall them, they would have already passed through a period of complete and bloody chaos, and would now undoubtedly be the possession of some other Power which there is every reason to believe would not have done as we have done; that is, would not have striven to

THE PHILIPPINES

teach them how to govern themselves or to have developed them, as we have developed them, primarily in their own interests. Save only our attitude toward Cuba, I question whether there is a brighter page in the annals of international dealing between the strong and the weak than the page which tells of our doings in the Philippines. I call especial attention to the admirably clear showing made by Secretary Taft of the fact that it would have been equally ruinous if we had yielded to the desires of those who wished us to go faster in the direction of giving the Filipinos self-government, and if we had followed the policy advocated by others, who desired us simply to rule the islands without any thought at all of fitting them for self-government. The islanders have made real advances in a hopeful direction, and they have opened well with the new Philippine Assembly; they have yet a long way to travel before they will be fit for complete self-government, and for deciding, as it will then be their duty to do, whether this self-government shall be accompanied by complete independence. It will probably be a generation, it may even be longer, before this point is reached; but it is most gratifying that such substantial progress toward this as a goal has already been accomplished. We desire that it be reached at as early a date as possible for the sake of the Filipinos and for our own sake. But improperly to endeavour to hurry the time will probably mean that the goal will not be attained at all."

THE PHILIPPINES

AN ACCOUNT OF THEIR PEOPLE
PROGRESS, AND CONDITION

BY

MRS. CAMPBELL DAUNCEY

WITH SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY

THE HON. WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT

AND

THE HON. THEODORE ROOSEVELT

VOLUME XV

