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California's Third Oriental Wave: A Sociohistorical Analysis

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**California's Third Oriental Wave:
A Sociohistorical Analysis**
SUSAN EVANGELISTA

On 10 January 1930, a California newspaper called the *Evening Pajaronian* published accounts of a set of strongly anti-Filipino resolutions authored by Judge D.W. Rohrback and passed by the Northern Monterey Chamber of Commerce two days earlier. These resolutions were most inflammatory, calling Filipinos "savages," referring to their "unAmerican" diet of fish and rice, accusing them of undermining the white wage scale, and so on. California had long been bothered by large numbers of Asian laborers, first Chinese and then Japanese, but this attack against Filipinos seemed out of proportion to the actual numerical threat posed by this "Third Wave" of oriental immigrants.¹

The Filipinos responded first with a four-page pamphlet called "The Torch," issued from Salinas, and then, after a mass meeting at Palm Beach, with a more formal, well-thought-out response which appeared in the *Evening Pajaronian* on 21 January. A.M. Magsuci's answer to Judge Rohrback includes the following question:

After admitting this truth [that Filipinos do accept sub-standard wages] I want to come back and ask the honorable judge the question: But why pick on the Filipinos only? Is it because the Filipinos are unwelcome little brown men but ten years removed from a bolo and a breech cloth [as charged] or *is it because the Filipinos have no Japanese emperor, Chinese President, Mexican President, or a Mussolini, behind them?*²

1. The best accounts of the incidents surrounding the Pajaro Resolution and the Watsonville Riot is in Emory S. Bogardus, "Anti-Filipino Race Riots," in *Letters in Exile* (Los Angeles: UCLA Asian-American Studies Center, 1976), pp. 51-63.

2. "Facts about Filipino Immigration into California," Special Bulletin No. 3 (San Francisco: Department of Industrial Relations, State of California, 1930), pp. 75-76. Italics added.

Magsuci's question was in fact a very important one, and it draws attention to one particular aspect of the Filipino-American experience which may very well have been crucial in determining the content of that experience: the colonial relationship between the United States and the Philippines. This paper is mainly an effort to put the socio-historical experience of the Filipino workers in the U.S. first in the context of this colonial relationship, and then, broader still, in the context of the general pattern of Asian immigration to the U.S. The reader may notice that this involves going in two directions at once: moving in a vertical fashion to get at the historical political relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines, and simultaneously moving horizontally to include the Chinese and the Japanese and their U.S. experiences. This is being done consciously not from schizophrenia but in a serious effort to pin down the historical milieu of the Filipino Americans. For it is in the intersection of these two lines that this milieu may best be seen and understood in its uniqueness.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

This study is dependent on two theoretical concepts. The first is simply that international relations do affect immigrant communities, and that they in turn may affect these relations. Don Nakanishi assures us that

the status and experience of minority groups cannot be explained or understood by focusing solely on the domestic relationship between minority groups and majorities nondomestic factors and actors oftentimes have an influence on what minorities do, how majorities act toward and perceive minorities, and how the relationship develops between them.³

This point is not worth belaboring, as it is no doubt obvious to anyone familiar with the history of Japanese Americans. With respect to Filipino Americans it is most apparent perhaps in the case of the martial law exiles whom we have been taught to call "Steak Commandos." But a little reflection will convince us that the old-timers, the Manongs, were actually involved, in a very real sense, in international politics.

3. Don T. Nakanishi, "Minorities and International Politics," in *Counterpoint: Perspectives on Asian America*, ed. Emma Gee (Los Angeles: Asian American Studies Center, UCLA, 1976), p. 82.

The second concept is that no one immigrant group and its experiences can be considered in isolation from other immigrant groups and their experiences. The U.S. is a land of immigrants—that is a cliché but also true. Sociologists have isolated several variables to explain the reception, treatment, and reaction of different immigrant groups: such variables as how physically conspicuous the group is, how many shared elements there are between the native culture and the new one, and so on.⁴ But equally important for the experience of any one group is that of the group before it, and the group before that. The Filipino experience in America can thus best be understood in the light of the experiences of the Japanese and Chinese before them.

Furthermore there are such things as general immigration trends—usually reflected in the law. And since immigration has been and is a very decisive element in the history of the U.S., it functions in a sense as an indication of over-all political and social thinking. This would take us farther afield than we want to be, although it is indeed tempting to see the Filipino experience in relation to some of the broader aspects of American history which did affect immigration: the great depression, the rising labor movement, and the general left/right struggle which seemed to dominate American history from the twenties to the fifties. All this background is necessary for a clear understanding of the Filipino experience, but much of it must remain in the background as we consider the following questions:

1. How did general immigration policies and laws, especially those having to do with Asians, affect Filipino immigrants? What were the ramifications in this area of the special colonial status of the Filipinos?
2. What American attitudes towards Asians were prevalent during the time under consideration? Were Filipinos subject to the same attitudes or somewhat modified ones?
3. Did Filipino immigrants differ from other Asian immigrants in ways other than their legal status? If variation existed, was this also dependent on the colonial relationship between the U.S. and the Philippines?

4. See, for instance, Stanley Lieberson, "A Societal Theory of Race and Ethnic Relations," in Raymond Mack, *Race, Class, and Power* (New York: American Book Co., 1968).

4. What attempts were made by the colonial government to protect its immigrants?
5. What was the relationship between the presence of the Filipino immigrants in the U.S. and the question of Philippine independence?
6. How did later changes in the status of the Philippines and in general U.S. immigration policy affect the immigrants?

ORIENTAL MIGRATIONS: CHINESE AND JAPANESE

In the beginning, of course, the U.S. was a wide open place actually begging for immigrants, settlers, workers. The California Gold Rush of 1849 disturbed what had been an orderly east to west expansion, and settlements in California became outposts of civilization, a thousand miles or more from the more thickly populated areas of the country. Thus arose the need for a transcontinental railroad – and for Chinese labor to do the building. The railroads in turn facilitated the development of the agriindustry which still dominates the national market for fruits and vegetables. The Chinese made this development possible not only by building the railroads but also by providing the agricultural manpower and know-how. Ben Tong says the Chinese were the crucial factor in the development of all kinds of agricultural endeavors, from the growing of potatoes, asparagus, and strawberries to the harvesting of seaweed.⁵

Californians, however, were not appreciative, and quickly began to hate and fear the Chinese, usually focussing this fear on the great numbers – the “hordes” – of Chinese peasants that seemed to be entering the country. Actually less than four hundred thousand Chinese entered the U.S. during the entire period of Chinese immigration, which lasted roughly from 1848 to 1887,⁶ but perhaps because the Chinese, and future Asian populations, were concentrated in California, they were disproportionately evident in that state. What followed was a series of attempts by the state of California to rid itself of the “oriental problem.” States

5. Ben R. Tong, “The Ghetto of the Mind: Notes on the Historical Psychology of Chinese America,” *Amerasia Journal* 1 (November 1971).

6. Oscar Handlin, *Immigration as a Factor in American History* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1959), p. 16.

of course cannot pass their own immigration laws or restrictions, and although California tried such clearly illegal measures such as requiring a \$500 bond on every entering Asian, eventually in lieu of any immediate possibility of national exclusion, cities simply passed what Tong calls "harassing ordinances": it was illegal to peddle by pole and basket; to run a laundry after 7:00 P.M.; to see Chinese operas after 12:00 P.M.; to wear a queue.⁷

Finally, in 1875, the United States, the country built by immigrants, passed its first national restrictive legislation on immigration, barring from the country criminals, paupers, people entering for immoral purposes, and coolie labor. This law was considered restrictive in terms of "quality" — that is, no race or nationality was singled out for restriction per se — but the "coolie labor" clause was, of course, directed primarily against the Chinese. In 1882 the Chinese were explicitly barred from permanent residency, and in the years that followed, further exclusion acts made it all but impossible for new Chinese to enter the country.

But steamships could not come back from Asia with empty steerage compartments — and strawberries and lettuce and onions had to be harvested in California — and so the Japanese entered, to fill both these voids, starting at about one thousand a year in 1885 and reaching twelve thousand in the year 1900.⁸

And, while the "second oriental wave" was just establishing itself as a wave, the U.S. suddenly entered Asia as a colonial power, buying the Philippine Islands from Spain in 1898 and, in so doing, setting up conditions that would allow for the growth of the "third oriental wave."

FILIPINOS' LEGAL STATUS

This abrupt (but nevertheless non-accidental) change in U.S. status caught the American legal system rather flatfooted, and there was some stumbling before questions of trade and tariff protection, new U.S. boundaries, and the status of the new colonial people could be answered. In 1901, Charles Magoon handed down the opinion for the Bureau of Insular Affairs, that the Philippines

7. Tong, "The Ghetto of the Mind."

8. Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice: Japanese Americans — Symbols of Racial Intolerance* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1945), p. 16.

had in fact become land "appertaining to the United States," but "not within the territorial boundaries" of the country. "There can be no question," continues Magoon,

that territory without the boundaries of the United States is not bound and privileged by our constitution

The sovereignty of the United States follows the flag. . . . but the territorial boundaries of the United States do not.⁹

Such reasoning may well have originated over the problem of tariffs and protection of certain U.S. agricultural products, but it had peculiar implications for the status of the Filipinos as well:

This brings the discussion to the question, are the inhabitants of said islands "citizens" of the United States? If by "citizen" is meant "a member of the civil state, entitled to all its privileges," the question must be answered in the negative, for even in the treaty it is provided that "the civil rights and political status," shall be determined by the Congress (Art. 9) and Congress has not yet made such determination. Nor do they fulfill the requirements of the fourteenth amendment to the Constitution for while they are subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, they are not "persons born or naturalized in the United States."¹⁰

Magoon goes on to say that Filipinos nevertheless owe allegiance to the U.S. for protection, maintenance of law and order, and so forth.

The Philippines was, then, according to Dr. Alejandro Fernandez, part of the United States for *some* purposes but not for others, and Filipinos were *nationals* but not *citizens*.¹¹ Fernandez clarifies the distinction by quoting from the U.S. Code annotated:

The term "national of the United States means, (a) a citizen of the United States, or, (b) a person who, though not a citizen of the United States, owes permanent allegiance to the United States."¹²

The naturalization act of 29 June 1906 provided that "non-alien" were eligible for citizenship, and this led the Attorney General to state that Filipinos were therefore eligible for citizen-

9. Charles Magoon, "Report on the Legal Status of the Territory and Inhabitants of the Islands acquired by the United States during the war with Spain" (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), pp. 13-17.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

11. Alejandro M. Fernandez, *International Law in Philippine Relations, 1898-1946* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1971), p. 91.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

ship, but in fact, says Fernandez, court cases were still decided the other way: in *Roque Espiritu de la Ysla vs. the U.S.*, for instance, it was decided that the old racial restrictions limiting citizenship to "free white persons, or persons of African nativity or descent" still held, and thus Filipinos could not be naturalized.¹³

So Filipinos were neither U.S. citizens nor eligible for U.S. citizenship. But neither could they be classified as alien, and thus they were eligible for immigration to the U.S. The decision in *Gonzales vs. Williams* (192 U.S., 48 L. ed. 312, 24 S. Ct. 177) reads in part:

A native of a territory who was an inhabitant thereof when it was ceded to the United States is not an alien within the meaning of the immigration laws.¹⁴

This means that, unlike their Chinese and Japanese forerunners, Filipinos could enter the United States freely. And although they did not have their own independent government to protect them or intercede for them, neither could they be legally excluded from the U.S. And this fact made a big difference in how they felt and acted, and also in how the native population acted towards them.

Nevertheless, these "privileged" Asians were not exactly lined up in front of the U.S. embassy for green cards in 1901. It is no coincidence that the "third oriental wave" did not really get underway until the second had collided violently with the unwelcoming shore and receded, for these waves were largely man-made. However, the stage was set.

ANTI-JAPANESE REACTIONS

In the meantime the Japanese had inherited a certain amount of anti-Chinese feeling in California. In March 1905, both houses of the state legislature unanimously passed resolutions urging the national congress to exclude the Japanese, and later that same year the Japanese and Korean Exclusion League was formed in San Francisco. The Japanese, like the Chinese before them, were invaluable to the development of California agriculture: they were

13. *Ibid.*, p. 111.

14. *American Jurisprudence* (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Co., 1936), vol. 2, p. 464.

almost solely responsible for the sugar beet industry; they turned swamp land into strawberry farms and reclaimed "hard-tap" into rice fields. Therefore, presumably growers and businessmen welcomed them, or at least quietly supported their presence. The center of anti-Japanese feeling was the San Francisco labor movement, and such arch-conservative organizations as the Native Sons of the Golden West (many of whom were second generation Irish or German immigrants), the California Grange, and the American Legion. Carey McWilliams suggests that these organizations "created more anti-Japanese opinion than they reflected."¹⁵ He then goes on to suggest that the school board incident of 1906, in which the board suddenly put into effect a resolution calling for the segregation of oriental students in the schools, touching off diplomatic protests and street demonstrations in Tokyo, was a politically manufactured issue to divert attention from charges of corruption against Mayor Schuttz (second generation German) and his henchmen, for there were only ninety-three Japanese in a school population of 25,000, and no one had ever made an official complaint against the Japanese.¹⁶

These particular California politicians apparently saw this as their contribution to the developing war against Japan. The national interpretation of the issue was, however, quite the opposite: Japanese-American relations were already strained and delicate, and President Roosevelt was most anxious to preserve the peace between them. The Japanese government was so resentful of this new discriminatory measure that President Roosevelt finally summoned the entire school board to Washington and talked them into reversing the resolution.

But since the national government had no way of controlling anti-Japanese sentiment in California, and since the Japanese did not want their countrymen exposed to such discrimination, the two governments worked out the Gentlemen's Agreement of 1907, by which the free immigration of Japanese labor to Hawaii was allowed, but the Japanese government was not to issue passports to citizens intending to enter the continental United States. In fact, however, the Japanese government refused to issue pass-

15. McWilliams, *Prejudice*, p. 24.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 26.

ports for workers going to Hawaii as well, effectively cutting off all immigration.

START OF THIRD WAVE

So once again the steerage compartments of the transpacific vessels were empty. And the Hawaiian sugar growers were worried about their labor supply. It was time to start the third wave. The Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association (H.S.P.A.) considered Portuguese and Cubans, but the prospect of Filipino workers had one advantage over the others: they could not be excluded.

The first recruiter, Albert F. Judd, came to the Philippines as early as 1906, in an active effort to recruit 300 families for employment in Hawaii – but nine months later he returned to Honolulu with only fifteen men. Full scale recruiting began in 1909, and even then it faced strong opposition from Filipinos: the people of Tacloban, for instance, attacked the recruiting agents with clubs and sticks and chased them away.¹⁷

In the meantime the Dollar Line, which ran ships between Manila and Seattle, also began recruiting immigrants, this time to the West Coast. This did *not* involve pre-arranged employment, but it did involve high-powered salesmanship: recruiters were paid a commission on ticket sales and pamphlets advertising the ship, the trip, and the destination were published in Ilocano. Steerage cost \$75 – a lot of money – but with the same sort of attitudes and aspirations that still induce poor families to sell their carabao or their land to see a daughter through nursing school and off to the U.S., the people scraped together the money and sent the most adventuresome of their sons. Both Hawaii and California did need labor – that is exactly why they set the wave in motion – so the early immigrants did relatively well for themselves. And when the first dollar checks arrived in Ilocos, or the first *balikbayans* came home to visit, wearing western suits and escorting foreign wives, the wave became self-perpetuating.

Approximately twenty years passed from the beginnings of Filipino immigration (1909) to the peak years of the late 1920s. These were, unfortunately for the Filipinos, years during which a great

17. Sr. Mary Dorita Clifford, "The Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association and Filipino Exclusion," in *Letters in Exile*, pp. 76-77.

deal of anti-foreign feeling grew up all over the United States. This feeling was highly political in content: both writers on immigration and writers on left-right politics agree that there has always been a connection in the popular mind between the foreigner and communism: the "Red," according to Alan D. Harper, was "the Cartoon figure of a bearded foreigner clutching a bomb."¹⁸ American radical politics of the time seemed to be dominated by Germans, and thus all foreigners were suspect. These feelings were intensified during the first world war.

In California these feelings were largely anti-Asian, and the momentum for Asian exclusion in the national legislature came largely from California senators and representatives. At the insistence of Senator James C. Phelan of California, the Immigration Law of 1917 provided for an *Asiatic barred zone* — i.e. an area of the Pacific, defined by latitude and longitude, from which *no* immigration was accepted. This area included most of China, but excluded certain coastal areas and also excluded Japan, and, of course, U.S. island possessions — i.e. the Philippines. Both the Chinese and the Japanese had already been effectively excluded, but, lest this new law be interpreted as superceding the old exclusion laws and agreements, Senator Phelan forced the inclusion of an explicit statement that this new law did not negate old treaties or agreements. Phelan was an out-and-out racist, attacking Asians on the grounds that they were "unassimilable":

The "melting pot," as we all know, is that crucible into which the people of the earth are put to the test of amalgamation. Sometimes they amalgamate and sometimes they do not. It is established that the brown [including Asians] and black races do not amalgamate with the white, but remain identically the same as when they are put into this melting pot or smelting pot. They do not amalgamate; they do not "smelt"; and therefore, they are undesirable elements in the composition of our population.¹⁹

Thus, by the time Filipinos began entering California in significant numbers, the "Asian problem" had been dealt with legislatively, with the single exception of the Filipinos who could not be excluded. Anti-Asian feeling, however, was still very strong, and was

18. Alan D. Harper, *The Politics of Loyalty: The White House and the Communist Issue, 1946-1952* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Corporation, 1969), p. 5.

19. *Immigration Bill: Debate on Oriental Immigration*. Speeches of Hon. James D. Phelan, Senator from California. (Washington, 1916).

to get stronger yet with the onset of the depression. And just as the Japanese had inherited that feeling from the Chinese, the Filipinos inherited it from the Japanese.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FILIPINO IMMIGRANTS

There were, however, some important differences in the Filipino group – most of which can be traced ultimately to the colonial experience, either to the early education of the immigrants in thoroughly American schools, or to the more subtle feeling of “special ties” which most of the immigrants had. They went to the U.S. with the feeling that it was *theirs* and would welcome them. Thus they tended to be a bit more fun-loving and extravagant than their grimmer-natured Asian predecessors. They worked hard of course, and were deadly serious in labor organizations, so prone to strike that growers essentially became wary of them. Nevertheless, they were likely to come into town, when the picking was finished, “rich” by their own standards and squander the whole season’s pay on old cars and new clothes, liquor and dancehall girls. Dancing with a hostess sometimes cost \$.10 a *minute*, making this, as Carey McWilliam pointed out, the most expensive entertainment available in the state.²⁰ But there were always takers. And this made them more conspicuous than the more retiring Chinese and Japanese.

INTER-MARRIAGE

Also, the Filipinos were considerably more prone than the other Asians to showing interest in white women, whether because of their years of American education or because of their naturally democratic spirit. There were, of course, no Filipinas available. But these young men coped with the absence of their own women in a somewhat different fashion than did their predecessors. And the fact that Filipinos would walk on the public streets openly with their white girl-friends deeply antagonized white men who considered these women *their* property. The whites were even more antagonized when Filipinos went ahead and married these

20. Carey McWilliams, *Factories in the Field* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1939).

girls, a right they were (briefly) entitled to because the state laws had not caught up with the situation. California had a long history of antimiscegenation laws which prohibited the issuance of marriage licenses to couples in which one was white and the other either Negro or Mongolian. No one knew exactly how to classify Filipinos, so sometimes they were issued licenses to marry whites, and sometimes they were denied them. There were at least two cases in which white-Filipino marriages were held to be void or illegal,²¹ and there were also cases in which judges refused to annul such marriages or decided to continue to license them. The legal point on which this indecision was based was the question of whether or not Filipinos were Mongolian.²² Before this point had been settled, some 1,775 mixed marriages involving Filipinos had taken place.²³ Then in 1933 the case of Salvador Roldan reached the California Court of Appeals, and this court ruled that Filipinos were *not* Mongoloid and therefore were free to marry whites in California. This decision superseded all the previous lower court findings.

But before the Roldan case had even been settled, a bill was introduced to the California state senate providing for an extension of the relevant sections of the Civil Code, sections sixty and sixty-nine, to include Filipinos: "All marriages of white persons with Negroes, Mongolians, *members of the Malay race*, or mulattoes are illegal and void."²⁴ This law retroactively invalidated previous such marriages. It seems, then, that in the state of California the Filipino was an Oriental, and was to be treated as such, even if he could not be legally excluded.

IDEALISTIC

He was, however, different from the Chinese and Japanese immigrants who preceded him, in other ways as well. American educators in the Philippines had done their work effectively, and the young Filipino immigrant was almost pitifully idealistic about

21. The Yatko case in 1925, and the Robinson Case in 1930.

22. For the details of these legal cases, see "Anti-Miscegenation Laws and the Pilipino," *Letters in Exile*, pp. 67-68.

23. Carey McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1943), p. 239.

24. "Anti-Miscegenation Laws and the Pilipino," p. 69.

the virtues of American democracy.²⁵ Carlos Bulosan tells one especially pathetic story about a high-minded cousin who went to the U.S. with the determination to study, first of all, for American citizenship – without even realizing that he was not legally eligible for such citizenship.²⁶ This, of course, is a fictionalized case, but hardly a far-fetched one. In the end of this story cousin Consorcio expresses his “Americanism” in a way which might be considered the particular contribution of the Filipinos in California: he became involved in labor organization. One might argue that it takes idealists, real believers in social equality, to go into this struggle. And that the Filipinos were, to a much greater degree than their Asian predecessors.

HIGHER SOCIAL CLASS

Neither were the Filipino immigrants quite the peasants fleeing from starvation that the other Asians were. The H.S.P.A. did recruit peasants, and until 1926 paid their passage to Hawaii, and California fruit growers did sometimes pirate these people from Hawaii. But Filipinos who went directly from Manila to the U.S. mainland had to pay their own way, and steerage passage from Manila to Seattle was \$75. It seems, too, that many Filipinos made the voyage in anticipation of enrolling in American schools and colleges, only to find that their English really did not qualify them for such work, or that the cousin who had promised the tuition money had disappeared, or that the money had been lost in the stock market crash. There are no reliable statistics on the number or percentage of Filipinos who entered the U.S. with such plans in mind, but Lasker points out that for many young men the rough work in the fruit fields or hotel kitchens was something to which they were not at all accustomed.²⁷

Maybe because of their non-peasant class origins, or because of their American education and their knowledge of English, or perhaps again because of some sort of natural exuberance and idealism, Filipinos were considerably more likely to become

25. See Bruno Lasker, *Filipino Immigration* (New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1969).

26. Carlos Bulosan, “Be American,” microfilm from the University of Washington.

27. Lasker, *Filipino Immigration*, p. 141.

“Americanized” than other Asian immigrants. They did group themselves together and remain Filipino, but they also ventured into the white world considerably more than the other groups, and they were sometimes rather proud of this adjustment. At home Filipinos were reading a series of articles by Ricardo Reyes in the January and February, 1929 issues of *Graphic* in which the “Americanization” of Filipinos in the U.S. was a constant theme. These articles painted a fantastically bright picture of the successes of Filipino immigrants, focussing on the astonishing earnings of Filipino labor contractors and even bus boys, and also on their fast and fascinating social life. And indeed, Filipinos formed social clubs, held beauty contests, were extremely active in labor unions, and published an incredible number of newspapers. They also of course, did backbreaking labor, found themselves hungry and unbearably lonely, and were subjected to all kinds of racist ‘hassling’. Nevertheless their history was, on the whole, characterized by a certain flamboyance which seems lacking in their more inwardly-directed Asian predecessors.

But of course this same flamboyance, this rather nonchalant, non-submissive attitude, roused the ire of the racist white population, and as the depression took hold, the bitterness of this response increased, culminating in Watsonville in 1930. The Watsonville riot took place simultaneously with the events already described in connection with Judge Rohrback’s Pajaro Resolutions, and in the same location, but the central event in this riot was not the Pajaro statement or the Filipinos answer to it, but the employment by the Filipinos of a group of white hostesses for their new clubhouse dance hall, a clear affront to the property rights of the white men of Watsonville.

One Filipino – Fermin Tuvera – was killed in this riot, and when his body was shipped back to Manila, students held a large indignation rally. This event seems to mark the first recognition by the people of the Philippines of the fact that they were not entirely welcome on the west coast, and of the problems of their countrymen in California.

CONCERN OF COLONIAL GOVERNMENT

This was not quite, however, the first recognition by the government of the problems of the immigrants. Needless to say, the

colonial government was more or less — depending on time — simply an extension of the American government, and the Filipino immigrant who answered the Pajaro resolution was right in his conjecture that this fact weakened the position of the immigrants. Nevertheless, the government occasionally responded to immigrant problems. The *Reports* of the Governors General from 1920 to 1932, for instance, unfailingly contain statistics on immigration and voice concern that the immigration of these most “able bodied, ambitious” Filipinos was “a serious loss to the country,” and something that could only be combatted by bettering economic conditions and equalizing opportunities.

But there was no easy way to curtail emigration in the face of the temptations offered by the H.S.P.A. and the high-pressure sales talks of recruiters who were paid ₱10 per recruit, ₱20 for those with families. There was a shortlived move in the Philippine Legislature to make labor recruitment illegal — a bill sponsored by Senator Quirino and Rep. Juan Luna of Mindoro, but it met with no success. There were certain *controls* placed on recruitment, mainly through a system of licensing which required the H.S.P.A. to pay ₱6,000 a year for the privilege of recruiting workers, plus ₱500 for each province in which recruiting was carried out.²⁸ In 1915 the H.S.P.A. was also required by Philippine Law to provide return transportation for laborers who had completed their three year contracts in Hawaii. Very few workers, however, took advantage of this.

Thus far, government concern for overseas Filipinos was mainly manifested in efforts to keep them from emigrating in the first place. For one brief moment of history, in 1924, the government actually became concerned with the treatment of sugar workers in Hawaii. This was the year of the High Wages Movement, a group under the leadership of a laborer named Pablo Manlapit, a Visayan, which seems to have been mostly Visayan in membership. In 1924, the High Wages Movement went on strike, demanding a wage increase from \$1 a day to \$2 a day, an eight hour work day, time and a half for overtime, and the recognition of the principle of collective bargaining and the right of sugar workers to organize for their own protection and benefit.²⁹

28. Serafin Macaraig, *Social Problems* (Manila: The Educational Supply Company, 1929), p. 202.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 217.

Serafin Macaraig says Secretary J. Butler of the H.S.P.A. was "militaristic" in dealing with this strike: as usual, strikers were evicted from their company houses, and in this instance a child of one of the strikers was expelled from the hospital and subsequently died. The strike turned violent, and in one incident five policemen and fifteen strikers were killed.³⁰

At this juncture, the H.S.P.A. and the Government of the Philippine Islands agreed to the appointment of a Filipino Commissioner of Labor in Hawaii, presumably to look after the interest of Filipino laborers there. Mr. Cayetano Ligot, an Ilocano, was the first commissioner. Ligot then proceeded to take the side of the plantation owners against the workers, and finally succeeded in getting the strikers to end the strike without having won any concessions.

Soon after that, however, Hermenegildo Cruz, head of the Department of Labor in Manila, made a special trip to Hawaii to reconcile the militants in the High Wage Movement to commissioner Ligot. Ligot then claimed that since he had been appointed directly by the governor general, he was not responsible to the Department of Labor at all, and Macaraig hints that Ligot therefore shares the same pro-capitalist outlook one might expect of the governor-general.³¹ Nevertheless, Cruz did bring about the desired reconciliation, and in his report to the Department of Labor, seems to stand solidly behind the commissioner.³²

There were no further labor troubles in the years that immediately followed, and Ligot's position — the one real attempt of the Philippine government to protect its citizens in the U.S. — atrophied. When Ligot left the position, he was not replaced.

ANTI-FILIPINO EXCLUSION MOVEMENT

Perhaps because the depression intensified the problems of unemployment of migrant laborers, adding as it did thousands of white migrants — Okies — to the California labor force, and perhaps because of the anti-Asian racial feeling that had developed in California in the wake of Chinese and Japanese immigration, an anti-

30. Lasker, *Filipino Immigration*, p. 174.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

32. *Bulletin, Department of Labor*, vol. 7, no. 25, (Manila: 1925).

Filipino exclusion movement soon started on the west coast. Eventually, as we shall see, this movement became tied up with the issue of Philippine independence, but at the beginning it seems to have been based on racial feeling and labor protectionism.

The first attempt at excluding Filipinos took the form of an exclusion bill sponsored by Congressman Richard Welch and Senator Hiram Johnson in 1927. This early plan simply involved placing Filipinos under the provisions of already-existing Oriental Exclusion Laws. The bill was defeated, however, on the ground that it would be unconstitutional to exclude U.S. nationals, as defined earlier, from entrance to and residence in the United States.³³ Congressman Welch, however, tried again the following year with a new exclusion bill, this time in the name of his labor constituents, and with the backing of the California State Federation of Labor under U.S. McClatchy, and the California Joint Immigration Committee under John B. Trevor. The bill was also supported by such "all-American" organizations as the Native Sons of the Golden West, The Commonwealth Club of California, and the California State Federation of Labor. But again it was defeated on the same grounds: nationals could not be legally excluded.³⁴

In 1929, the California state legislature passed joint resolution No. 15, seeking congressional restriction on Filipino immigration:

The present absence of restriction on immigration from the Philippine Islands opens the door annually to thousands of Filipinos causing unjust and unfair competition to American labor, and nullifying the beneficial results to be expected from a national policy of restrictive immigration.³⁵

Such a resolution, however, had no binding power and effected no legal changes.

In December 1930, as the depression deepened, Senator David A. Reed of Pennsylvania introduced a bill that would cut off *all* immigration for a period of two years. This was viewed as an emergency measure to help ease employment pressures, and it specifically included Filipinos although it excluded immigration to

33. Manuel Buaken, *I Have Lived With the American People* (Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Press Ltd., 1946), p. 155.

34. Lasker, *Filipino Immigration*, p. 34.

35. "Facts About Filipino Immigration into California," *Special Bulletin* No. 3 (San Francisco: Department of Industrial Relations, State of California, 1930), p. 9.

Hawaii from its general provisions.³⁶ The bill, however, was defeated.

ISSUE OF PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE

By this time it had become quite clear that Filipinos could not be excluded unless the Philippines was granted its independence: in fact exclusionists had shifted their approach, and independence had become the main issue.³⁷ (It was still, of course, for the labor groups merely a *tactic*). At any rate, Filipinos had most definitely put the two problems together into one: in a speech made at the University of the Philippines on 26 March 1929, President Quezon said the following:

I see a great injustice in the move to prohibit our laborers from entering the United States as long as America retains the islands. . . . the movement to bar Filipino laborers from the United States shows conclusively that the racial differences between the two countries constitute an obstacle to the permanent political union of the two countries that is insurmountable. . . . We have every reason to tell Americans that if they will not permit us to enter that country, they have no right to keep us. And those fair-minded Americans will say "It is evident that we are not meant to be married. Let us be divorced."³⁸

At about the same time there was a very interesting, although perhaps not entirely serious, suggestion by Rep. Antonio de las Alas, of the Philippine Lower House, that Filipinos start a mass migration movement to the U.S. in order to strengthen U.S. anti-Filipino sentiment, thereby hastening independence.³⁹ It is probably not too facetious to suggest that in fact the early immigrants did function in this manner, albeit unintentionally and with much equally unintentional help from other Asian immigrant groups.

At any rate, the Tydings-McDuffie Bill or Philippine Independence Act, gained perhaps 25 percent of its support from anti-immigration interests, some in the deep south but most in the far west,⁴⁰ and went into effect on 1 May 1934, cutting off Filipino

36. Lasker, *Filipino Immigration*, pp. 37-38.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 274-78.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-77.

40. See Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 106-8.

immigration into the United States. Once again Hawaii was not covered by this law: section B (a) 1 of the bill provided that Filipinos would be subject to all existing U.S. immigration laws except for those wishing to enter Hawaii to fill labor needs there, as determined by the Department of the Interior.⁴¹ In the interim of the Commonwealth government, that is, from the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act to complete independence in 1946, the Philippines was allotted an immigration quota of fifty persons per year. McWilliams points out the discriminatory nature of this limitation by comparing the quota of fifty for a population of 16 million with the quota of 100 for Monaco with a population of 2,020.⁴²

But apparently simply cutting off the arrival of more Filipinos was not enough, and there were actually moves in Congress to deport Filipinos. HR 6464, passed in 1935, provided for free repatriation for all Filipinos who wished to avail themselves of such a plan. The "catch" was that "no Filipino who receives the benefits of this act shall be entitled to return to the continental United States," except as part of the very limited yearly quota of fifty.⁴³ Not surprisingly, this was also a Welch Bill. But, says Buaken, although original estimates of the number of Filipinos who would want to avail of this service were approximately ten thousand, somewhat less than two thousand actually did so.⁴⁴

Filipinos who had immigrated to the U.S. before 1934, like Carlos and Aurelio Bulosan, Cris Mensalvas, and so on, were, of course, permitted to stay on as permanent residents. They were still, however, racially ineligible to become citizens, except under certain special provisions which involved service in the United States Military.⁴⁵

BREAKDOWN OF ANTI-FILIPINO REACTIONS

As a matter of fact, when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and invaded the Philippines in early December 1941, U.S. Filipinos flocked to recruitment centers to join the Armed Forces,

41. Clifford, "The Hawaiian Sugar Planters," p. 85.

42. McWilliams, *Brothers Under the Skin*, p. 242.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Buaken, *I Have Lived*, p. 159.

45. See A. Fernandez, *International Law*, for various such provisions.

only to be told that as non-citizens and non-alien, they were ineligible. However, the Philippine Resident Commissioner in Washington, J.M. Elizalde, raised the problem with the War Department and the president, and on 3 January 1942 (the day after Manila fell), the national headquarters of the Selective Service System issued instructions to local boards that Filipinos should be accepted under the same terms as citizens of the U.S.⁴⁶

The following month the Secretary of War announced the formation of the First Filipino Infantry Battalion, initially stationed at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. Aurelio Bulosan was in this battalion and with it when it participated in the reoccupation of the Philippines at the end of the war.⁴⁷ Here again Americans were naturally impressed with Filipino "loyalty" and war fervor, and this in turn furthered the breakdown of racist attitudes.

Americans of course had begun to fear fascism greatly (although they continued to take fascistic action against the Japanese), and after Bataan there was much genuine admiration for and interest in Filipinos. They were no longer simply unwanted immigrants: they were war refugees from a brave little country that was allied to the American cause. Manuel Buaken records somewhat plaintively.

There is something intangible in the air that says that America has learned to respect us. No longer on the streetcar do I feel myself in the presence of enemies. We Filipinos are the same – it is the Americans that have changed in their recognition of us.⁴⁸

The change was not perhaps so much a matter of individual "recognition" as simply a matter of historical movement. The times called for a united front against fascism, relegating the internal American right/left struggle to the background, temporarily at least. By the time that struggle came to the fore again, racism and xenophobia had receded as elements in it. There was still some anti-foreign feeling in the post-war McCarthy era, but the struggle was then more overtly one of political ideologies. The days of racist lynchings were over, and for many Filipinos McCarthyism had no personal repercussions. Filipinos who were active in labor organizations were of course adversely affected,

46. Bienvenido Santos, "Filipinos at War," *Letters in Exile*, p. 93.

47. Interview with Aurelio Bulosan conducted in Lompoc, California, 2 June 1978.

48. Buaken, *I Have Lived*.

but the focus was clearly on the fact of radical labor organization, and not on the fact of race.

NEW FILIPINO IMMIGRANTS

As immigration laws changed, a new class of Filipinos entered the U.S. By 1965 there were no more racial qualifications for immigration, but instead a system of "preferences," with professionals high on the list. This means that recent immigrants are on the whole much wealthier at home than were the early immigrants. Even if they end up in jobs for which they are overqualified (as is the case with many white professionals today), they do not live like farm hands. Neither do they experience the type of social discrimination that the "old-timers" faced. This seems to support the contention that at least at this time in history, race is not as important as social class and political ideology in contributing to the essential divisions of American society.

In 1970 there were 343,000 Filipinos in the United States and it is estimated that ninety thousand more Filipinos immigrated in the following three years. With more than twenty-five thousand Filipinos immigrating every year, they are second in numbers only to Mexicans. But they have little in common with the old Manongs.

In twenty years the last of the Manongs will be dead. The immigrants of the last ten years have refused to acknowledge them anyway. But these old men did play an important role in history as pioneers in and victims of U.S.-Philippine relations. They were also victims of their historical milieu in other ways — victims of the depression, of California's agricultural system, and of the racist feeling generated by the response to Chinese and Japanese immigrants. It is no wonder then that Filipinos in the Philippines, in that time and this, have very little sympathy for their immigrant brothers. Their experiences cannot be understood apart from their historical milieu.