

## VII

### CONQUEST AND PURCHASE

#### 1. *From Economic Expansion to Political Sovereignty*

The process of acquiring interests outside of the United States begins with the setting up of trading ventures and other enterprises which imply no control over the political life of the country in which they are established. The process ends with complete political domination over the outlying territory.

There are two principal ways in which the sovereignty of the United States is extended over new territories; the first is by conquest and the second by purchase. It may be true, as the Declaration of Independence states, that all just governments derive their powers from the consent of the governed, but the fact remains that history—and particularly modern history—tells the story of hundreds of millions, in Asia and Africa, who have been brought under the control of some powerful European state without being consulted as to their wishes in the matter. With the exception of the Mexican War, certain of the Indian wars and the Spanish War of 1898, the United States has done little in the direction of acquiring control over foreign territory. There are instances, however, particularly in recent years, in which the sovereignty of the United States has been extended over populations that had expressed no desire for its presence.

The story is simple. It has been told repeatedly and is well known. There is no serious difference of opinion as to the facts. The matter is treated with sufficient fulness in any of the current histories.

The annexation of Porto Rico, the conquest of the Philippines and the purchase of the Virgin Islands are three type cases of the extension of United States sovereignty. Porto

Rico was occupied during the war with Spain (1898) without opposition from the inhabitants. The Philippines were conquered during a war that lasted from 1899 to 1901. The Virgin Islands were purchased from Denmark in 1917.

Porto Rico may be dismissed in a few sentences. The island was occupied by the United States army beginning July 25, 1898; ceded to the United States under the Treaty of April 11, 1899 (note: President McKinley, on July 30, 1898, in his negotiations with Ambassador Cambon demanded the cession of Porto Rico by way of indemnity),<sup>1</sup> and after a long controversy the Porto Ricans were given their American citizenship by the Act of March 2, 1917. There has never been, in Porto Rico, any organized opposition to the presence of the United States. The island was a war prize whose inhabitants were for the most part satisfied to make the change of sovereignty which the fortunes of war brought about.

## 2. *The Philippine Republic*

The conquest of the Philippines is a different story. These islands, which had been in open rebellion against Spain before the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, refused to accept the American occupation as the Porto Ricans had done, preferring to fight a war of independence, even against overwhelming odds.

The Philippine Rebellion of 1896, led by Aguinaldo, had wrung from Spain an agreement (the treaty of Briac-na-bato) under which the Governor-General agreed to introduce certain reforms, and the leaders of the revolution agreed to withdraw from the islands on payment of a million dollars. Pursuant to this agreement, Aguinaldo was living in Singapore in May, 1898.

While Admiral Dewey was at Hong Kong, preparing to leave for Manila, he was advised by the American Consul at Singapore that Aguinaldo was willing to co-operate with the Americans. Dewey cabled back: "Tell Aguinaldo come soon as possible." After the battle of Manila Bay, Aguinaldo was

<sup>1</sup> U. S. "Foreign Relations," 1898, p. 820.

brought to Manila with thirteen members of his staff, in the United States gunboat *McCullock*. He was allowed to land at Cavite, was encouraged to organize the revolutionists, and was given guns from the Spanish arsenal.<sup>1</sup>

The Filipinos assumed from the outset that the Philippines were to be treated substantially as Cuba was treated. Aguinaldo hailed the Americans as the liberators of his people. In a proclamation of May 24, 1898, he wrote: "Now that the great and powerful North American nation have come to offer disinterested protection for an effort to secure the liberation of this country."<sup>2</sup>

Plans were drawn up for the organization of a Philippine Republic. On June 18, Aguinaldo proclaimed a temporary "Dictatorial Government."<sup>3</sup>

Aguinaldo and his followers then proceeded to clear the Philippines of Spanish garrisons to such good purpose that, by the end of the year, they held practically the entire archipelago. On January 21, 1899, Aguinaldo, in the name of the Revolutionary Government, proclaimed the "Constitution of the Philippine Republic."<sup>4</sup>

### 3. "Co-operating with Aguinaldo"

On July 4, 1898, General Anderson, in command of the United States army in the Philippines, wrote to Aguinaldo: "I desire to have the most amicable relations with you, and to have you and your people co-operate with us in military operations against the Spanish forces."<sup>5</sup>

The negotiations between the American authorities and Aguinaldo, and the extent to which the two co-operated in the days following Aguinaldo's arrival, is well illustrated in the testimony given by Admiral Dewey before the Senate Committee in 1902.<sup>6</sup> Aguinaldo and his forces participated with the United

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Philippine Commission, "Report," 1900, v. 1, p. 171 ff.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Congress, 57:1; "Sen. Doc." 331, p. 2955.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 55:3; "Sen. Doc." 62, pp. 432-7.

<sup>4</sup> Elliott, "Philippines," Appendix G.

<sup>5</sup> U. S. Congress, 56:1; "Sen. Doc." 208, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 57:1; "Sen. Doc." 331, p. 2934 ff.

States forces in the capture of Manila. Indeed, the Filipinos had completely invested the city, and withdrew from a part of the lines in favour of the American troops under General Merritt. The city was assaulted on August 13, 1898, by the joint forces of the Filipinos and the Americans. When the city capitulated, under the terms of the agreement the Americans occupied the walled city, and the Filipinos remained in the outer town.

General Merritt had come to the Philippines with specific instructions not to recognize the Philippine Republic, but to establish a provisional government. General Otis, who succeeded General Merritt, refused to continue the joint occupation of Manila with Aguinaldo, and on September 8, 1898, directed Aguinaldo to withdraw his troops, in these words: "Unless your troops are withdrawn beyond the line of the city's defenses before Thursday, the fifteenth instant, I shall be obliged to resort to forcible action."<sup>1</sup> Aguinaldo withdrew as directed.

On December 21, President McKinley ordered General Otis to extend the military government to the entire Philippine archipelago. His instructions ended with this paragraph:

"It should be the earnest and paramount aim of the military administration to win the confidence, respect, and affection of the inhabitants of the Philippines by assuring them in every possible way that full measure of individual rights and liberties which is the heritage of free peoples, and by proving to them that the mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation, substituting the mild sway of justice and right for arbitrary rule. In the fulfilment of this high mission, supporting the temperate administration of affairs for the greatest good of the governed, there must be sedulously maintained the strong arm of authority, to repress disturbance and to overcome all obstacles to the bestowal of the blessings of good and stable government upon the people of the Philippine Islands under the free flag of the United States"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U. S. War Dept., "Annual Report," 1899, v. 1, pt. IV, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Congress, 57:1; "Sen. Doc." 331, p. 777.

The Presidential proclamation sealed the fate of the Philippine Republic. Henceforth the outbreak of hostilities was only a question of time and occasion. The publication of the proclamation greatly strengthened the hands of the war faction among the Filipinos, and while Aguinaldo succeeded in preventing a declaration of war, a fight, starting between a handful of Filipinos and an American sentry, on February 4, 1899, began an "insurrection" which ended officially on July 4, 1902. During the Philippine War 4,067 United States officers and 122,401 enlisted men served in the Philippines, with losses of 140 officers and 4,234 men, killed or died of wounds, disease, etc., and 204 officers and 2,818 men wounded.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. *Disposing of the Philippines*

The war between the Revolutionary Government of the Philippines and the Government of the United States ended with the annihilation of the Philippine Republic. There remained the question of the political disposition of the islands.

While the victory of Dewey at Manila had put the capital of the Philippines under titular American control, there was at first no intention on the part of the American authorities to demand the islands from Spain. The protocol, signed August 12, 1898, provided only for the occupation by the United States of "the city, bay, and harbor of Manila pending the conclusion of a treaty of peace which shall determine the control, disposition, and government of the Philippines."<sup>2</sup>

A month later (September 16, 1898) in his letter of instructions to the Peace Commissioners, President McKinley wrote:

"Without any original thought of complete or even partial acquisition, the presence and success of our arms at Manila imposes upon us obligations which we cannot disregard. The march of events rules and overrules human action. Avowing unreservedly the purpose which has animated all our effort, and still solicitous to adhere to it, we cannot be unmindful that, without

<sup>1</sup> Heitman, "Historical Register," v. 2, p. 293.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. "Foreign Relations," 1898, p. 824.

any desire or design on our part, the war has brought us new duties and responsibilities which we must meet and discharge as becomes a great nation on whose growth and career from the beginning the Ruler of Nations has plainly written the high command and pledges of civilization.

"Incidental to our tenure in the Philippines is the commercial opportunity to which American statesmanship cannot be indifferent. It is just to use every legitimate means for the enlargement of American trade; but we seek no advantages in the orient which are not common to all. Asking only the open door for ourselves, we are ready to accord the open door to others." . . . "The United States cannot accept less than the cession in full right and sovereignty of the island of Luzon."<sup>1</sup>

The Philippine discussion occupied the Peace Commission at Paris for a month. Late in October, the American Commission cabled for further instruction. Secretary Hay replied:

"The information which has come to the President since your departure convinces him that the acceptance of the cession of Luzon alone, leaving the rest of the islands subject to Spanish rule, or to be the subject of future contention, cannot be justified on political, commercial, or humanitarian grounds. The cession must be of the whole archipelago or none. The latter is wholly inadmissible, and the former must therefore be required."<sup>2</sup>

The Spanish Commission opposed this demand on the ground that it violated the protocol. Finally, the United States agreed to pay \$20,000,000 and Spain ceded the islands.

José S. Reyes has made a very careful study of President McKinley's change of mind with regard to the retention of the Philippines.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of the cession, the Spaniards had been practically driven from the islands. Manila was held by the armed forces of the United States and the remainder of the territory was being administered by a provisional government of the Philippine Republic.

<sup>1</sup> U. S. "Foreign Relations," 1898, p. 907.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 935.

<sup>3</sup> Reyes, "Legislative History of America's Economic Policy Toward the Philippines."

### 5. *Pacification and the Civil Government*

The change in American opinion regarding the desirability of keeping the Philippines, had been brought about, as President McKinley repeatedly suggested, by the commercial fields which the islands presented. An immediate effort was therefore made to re-establish law and order under the direction of a civil governor—William H. Taft—who was inaugurated July 4, 1901.

The work of the civil government centred about the establishment of public order, education, road building, and sanitation. In all of these directions immense strides were made.<sup>1</sup> While the Filipinos themselves had not abandoned their hope of independence, it was generally assumed in the United States that the islands were not yet capable of self-government.

Between 1902, when the civil government bill was before Congress, and 1916, when the Jones Act was passed, the Democratic Party championed a system of "qualified independence." The election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912, on a platform which stated: "We reaffirm the position thrice announced by the democracy in national convention assembled against a policy of imperialism and colonial exploitation in the Philippines, or elsewhere. . . . We favour an immediate declaration of the nation's purpose to recognize the independence of the Philippine Islands as soon as a stable government can be established,"<sup>2</sup> had been hailed as a harbinger of immediate independence. These hopes were strengthened when Francis B. Harrison, the new Governor General, was sent to the Philippines in August, 1913, with this message from the President:

"We regard ourselves as trustees acting not for the advantage of the United States, but for the benefit of the people of the Philippine Islands.

"Every step we take will be taken with a view to the ultimate independence of the Islands and as a preparation for that independence. And we hope to move towards that end as rapidly as the

<sup>1</sup> Elliott, "Philippines," chs. VIII-X, XIII.

<sup>2</sup> "Democratic Text Book," 1912, p. 30.

safety and the permanent interests of the Islands will permit. After each step taken experience will guide us to the next.

"The administration will take one step at once and will give to the native citizens of the Islands a majority in the Appointive Commission, and thus in the Upper as well as in the Lower House of the Legislature a majority representation will be secured to them.

"We do this in the confident hope and expectation that immediate proof will be given in the action of the Commission under the new arrangement of the political capacity of those native citizens who have already come forward to represent and to lead their people in affairs."<sup>1</sup>

Following out this policy, Governor Harrison replaced American officials by Filipinos, with the assurance that as soon as the necessary aptitude for self-government was demonstrated, the islands would be granted their independence. Congress, in March, 1916, gave its approval to this policy by passing the Jones Law, with the following preamble:

"Whereas it was never the intention of the people of the United States in the incipency of the War with Spain to make it a war of conquest or for territorial aggrandizement; and

"Whereas it is, as it has always been, the purpose of the people of the United States to withdraw their sovereignty over the Philippine Islands and to recognize their independence *as soon as a stable government can be established therein*; and

"Whereas, for the speedy accomplishment of such purpose, it is desirable to place in the hands of the people of the Philippines as large a control of their domestic affairs as can be given them without in the meantime impairing the exercise of the rights of sovereignty by the people of the United States in order that by the use and exercise of popular franchise and governmental powers they may be the better prepared to fully assume the responsibilities and enjoy all the privileges of complete independence."<sup>2</sup>

Education, civil government, commerce and industry made great strides during the years between 1913 and 1920.<sup>3</sup> At

<sup>1</sup> Harrison, "Corner-Stone of Philippine Independence," p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Congress, 67:4; "House Doc." 511, p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8 ff.

the same time there arose a very emphatic desire among the Philippine leaders to have the Philippines for the Filipino. The great areas of uncultivated land (the Filipinos report 6,356,927 hectares of public land "available for home seekers"<sup>1</sup>), the 65,000 square miles of timber, but above all the situation of the islands "at the cross-roads to the greatest trade routes of the future" make them rich prizes.<sup>2</sup>

Filipino leaders have had another reason for insisting that the Philippines must do their own developing. They fear that the investment of large sums of American capital will "become an excuse or a pretext for postponing or even putting off indefinitely the day of their national independence."<sup>3</sup> By way of further safeguard, the Philippine National Bank, much to the displeasure of competitive institutions already in the field, was organized in 1915. In addition, the government bought the Manila Railroad, organized a National Coal Company and a National Development Company, "for the purpose of financing isolated enterprises that the government may desire to establish for the general welfare of the country."<sup>4</sup>

#### 6. *Growing American Interests*

Meanwhile American economic interests in the islands had grown apace. By 1920, 135 United States corporations, with a total capital stock of \$433 million, were registered in the islands. Among these organizations, 87 were engaged in commerce, 16 in mining and agriculture, and 25 in manufacturing.<sup>5</sup>

The available and unexploited resources of the Philippines, the considerable investments of United States citizens in the islands, the effort of the Philippine leaders to governmentalize business in order to increase the control of the Philippine people over their own economic affairs, combined to favour the conflict between the United States investors and the movement for Philippine independence.

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Congress, 67:4; "House Doc." 511, p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> "Annalist," v. 23, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> "Current History Magazine," v. 19, p. 283.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Congress, 67:4; "House Doc." 511, pp. 73-4.

<sup>5</sup> Philippine Islands, "Statistical Bulletin," No. 3, p. 255.

### 7. *The Wood-Forbes Report*

The issue was brought to a head by the appointment (March 20, 1921) of a special mission, headed by Major-General Leonard Wood, which made a study at first hand of the position of the Philippines and which submitted a report reviewing these conditions, and concluding that:

1. "The great bulk of the Christian Filipinos have a very natural desire for independence; most of them desire independence under the protection of the United States; a very small percentage desire immediate independence with separation from the United States; a very substantial element is opposed to independence, especially at this time.

2. "The Moros are a unit against independence and are united for continuance of American control and, in case of separation of the Philippines from the United States desire their portion of the islands to be retained as American territory under American control.

3. "The Americans in the islands are practically a unit for the continuance of American control." <sup>1</sup>

Public order is well maintained by the constabulary: "The progressive development of the school system has been phenomenal." <sup>2</sup> Economic development has been "very gratifying" particularly since 1913. The national debt is unusually small (only \$1.81 per capita, as compared with \$25 in Cuba and \$237 in the United States). The Philippine National Bank has fared badly, partly because of mismanagement and partly because of the severe business depression of 1920-1921.

"The Government has entered into certain lines of business usually left to private initiative. . . . In our judgment the government should as far as possible get out of and keep out of business." <sup>3</sup>

Among the general conclusions of the mission are the following:

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Philippine Islands, Special Mission to, "Report," 1921, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

"We find the people happy, peaceful, and in the main prosperous, and keenly appreciative of the benefits of American rule.

"We find everywhere among the Christian Filipinos the desire for independence, generally under the protection of the United States. The non-Christians and Americans are for continuance of American control.

"We find a general failure to appreciate the fact that independence under the protection of another nation is not true independence. . . .

"We feel that with all their many excellent qualities, the experience of the past eight years, during which they have had practical autonomy, has not been such as to justify the people of the United States in relinquishing supervision of the government of the Philippine Islands, withdrawing their army and navy, and leaving the island a prey to any powerful nation coveting their rich soil and potential commercial advantages."<sup>1</sup>

Recommendation number one, as presented by the mission, is that "the present general status of the Philippine Islands continue until the people have had time to absorb and thoroughly master the powers already in their hands." And number three reads: "In case of a deadlock between the Governor General and the Philippine Senate in the confirmation of appointments that the President of the United States be authorized to make and render the final decision."<sup>2</sup>

Following the report, General Wood was made Governor of the Philippines. A struggle ensued between the Filipino legislature and the Governor General, in the course of which the Filipino leaders sought by political pressure to force President Coolidge to fulfil the promise of the Jones Act, and to make good the statement of President Wilson in his message of December 7, 1920:

"The people of the Philippine Islands have succeeded in maintaining a stable government since the last action of the Congress in their behalf, and have thus fulfilled the condition set by the Congress as precedent to a consideration of granting independence to the Islands. I respectfully submit that this condition precedent having been fulfilled, it is now our liberty and our duty to keep our prom-

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Philippine Islands, Special Mission to, "Report," 1921, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

ise to the people of those Islands by granting them the independence which they so honorably covet." <sup>1</sup>

President Coolidge's letter of February 21, 1924, to Manuel Roxas strikes a far different note:

The White House,  
Washington,  
Feb. 21, 1924.

MY DEAR MR. ROXAS:

The resolutions adopted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines, touching upon the relations between the Filipino people and the Government of the United States, have been received. I have noted carefully all that you have said regarding the history of these relations. I have sought to inform myself so thoroughly as might be, as to the occasions of current irritation between the Legislature of the Philippines and the executive authority of the islands.

In your presentment you have set forth more or less definitely a series of grievances, the gravamen of which is that the present executive authority of the islands, designated by the United States Government, is in your opinion out of sympathy with the reasonable national aspirations of the Filipino people.

If I do not misinterpret your protest, you are disposed to doubt whether your people may reasonably expect, if the present executive policy shall continue, that the Government of the United States will in reasonable time justify the hopes which your people entertain of ultimate independence.

The world is in a state of high tension. . . . The possibility of either economic or political disorders calculated to bring misfortune, if not disaster, to the Filipino people unless they are strongly supported, is not to be ignored.

It should not be overlooked that within the past two years, as a result of international arrangements negotiated by the Washington Conference on Limitation of Armament and problems of the Far East, the position of the Filipino people has been greatly improved and assured. For the stabilizing advantages which accrue to them in virtue of the assurance of peace in the Pacific, they are directly indebted to the initiative and efforts of the American Government.

<sup>1</sup> U. S. "Congressional Record," v. 60, p. 26.

They can ill afford in a time of so much uncertainty in the world to underrate the value of these contributions to their security.

Although they have made wonderful advances in the last quarter century, the Filipino people are by no means equipped, either in wealth or experience, to undertake the heavy burden which would be imposed upon them with political independence. Their position in the world is such that without American protection there would be the unrestricted temptation to maintain an extensive and costly diplomatic service and an ineffective but costly military and naval service.

It is to be doubted whether, with the utmost exertion, the most complete solidarity among themselves, the most unqualified and devoted patriotism, it would be possible for the people of the islands to maintain an independent place in the world for an indefinite future.

A fair appraisal of all these considerations and others which suggest themselves which do not require enumeration will, I am sure, justify the frank statement that the Government of the United States would not feel that it had performed its full duty by the Filipino people, or discharged all of its obligations to civilization, if it should yield at this time to your aspirations for national independence.

I should be less than candid with you, however, if I did not say that in my judgment the strongest argument that has been used in the United States in support of immediate independence of the Philippines is not the argument that it would benefit the Filipinos, but that it would be of advantage to the United States.

Feeling as I do, and as I am convinced the great majority of Americans do regarding our obligations to the Filipino people, I have to say that I regard such arguments as unworthy. The American people will not evade or repudiate the responsibility they have assumed in this matter.

The American Government is convinced that it has the overwhelming support of the American nation in its conviction that present independence would be a misfortune and might easily become a disaster to the Filipino people. Upon that conviction, the policy of this Government is based.

Thus far I have suggested only some of the reasons related to international concerns, which seem to me to urge strongly against

independence at this time. I wish now to review for a moment some domestic concerns of the Philippine Islands which seem also to urge against present independence. The American Government has been most liberal in opening to the Filipino people the opportunities of the largest practicable participation in, and control of, their own Administration.

It has been charged that the present Governor General has in some matters exceeded his proper authorities, but an examination of the facts seems rather to support the charge that the legislative branch of the Insular Government has been the real offender, through seeking to extend its own authority into some areas of what should properly be the executive realm.

The Government of the United States has full confidence in the ability, good intentions, fairness and sincerity of the present Governor General. It is convinced that he has intended to act and has acted within the scope of his proper and constitutional authority. Thus convinced, it is determined to sustain him, and its purpose will be to encourage the broadest and most intelligent co-operation of the Filipino people in this policy.

Looking at the whole situation fairly and impartially, one cannot but feel that if the Filipino people cannot co-operate in the support and encouragement of as good administration as has been afforded under Governor General Wood, their failure will be rather a testimony of unpreparedness for the full obligations of citizenship than an evidence of patriotic eagerness to advance their country.

If the time comes when it is apparent that independence would be better for the people of the Philippines, from the point of view of both their domestic concerns and their status in the world, and if when that time comes the Filipino people desire complete independence, it is not possible to doubt that the American Government and people will gladly accord it.

Yours very truly,  
CALVIN COOLIDGE,<sup>1</sup>

Evidently the Filipinos will be compelled, despite their vigorous and repeated protests, to live for some time to come "under the free flag of the United States" as President McKinley phrased it on December 21, 1898.

<sup>1</sup> "New York Times," March 6, 1924, p. 1:1.

### 8. *The Virgin Islands—A Strategic Key*

The Virgin Islands are neither a sphere of influence nor a protectorate; they were not conquered in war nor were revolutions fomented to obtain them. They were bought as a valuable piece of property, and with the purchase came complete domination over 26,000 people.

The value of the Virgin Islands to the United States is almost entirely military. They are located in the Caribbean Sea, of which one naval strategist has said: "One thing is sure. In the Caribbean Sea is the strategic key to the two great oceans, the Atlantic and the Pacific, our own chief maritime frontiers."<sup>1</sup>

The Virgin Islands are divided into three groups. One group includes the islands of Culebra, Vieques and adjacent smaller islands. These formerly belonged to Spain but were acquired by the United States following the Spanish American War. The second group, including the islands of Tortola, Anegada and Virgin Gorda belong to Great Britain. The third group, known until 1917 as the Danish West Indies, include the islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix and about fifty smaller islands, comprising a total area of about one hundred and fifty square miles. This group is located east of Porto Rico—St. Thomas about forty miles to the east, and St. Croix about a hundred miles.

The islands were discovered by Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. They were first settled by Danes who came to St. Thomas in 1666. Eight years later negro slaves were imported and by 1680 there were about fifty flourishing plantations cultivating chiefly tobacco. The islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix remained the property of Denmark for 250 years, except for a brief period during the Napoleonic Wars when they were seized by Great Britain for strategic purposes. The population of the islands has remained to this day predominantly negro.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mahan, "Naval Strategy," p. 382.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Congress, 66:2; "House Doc." 734, pp. 5-6.

The first attempts of the United States to acquire the Danish West Indies were made during President Lincoln's second administration in 1865. Secretary of State Seward was impressed by their strategic value, chiefly because during the Civil War St. Thomas afforded refuge to Southern privateers and blockade runners. In 1866 Seward visited the islands, and the following year offered Denmark \$5,000,000 for the group. Negotiations were carried on in great secrecy.<sup>1</sup> They were for a time delayed by the assassination of Lincoln and the wounding of Seward, but finally the State Department and Denmark compromised on \$7,500,000 for the two islands of St. Thomas and St. John. A plebiscite in the islands—insisted upon by Denmark—resulted in a large vote for cession to the United States. A treaty was drawn up for the transfer of the islands. It was immediately ratified by the Danish Rigsdag and signed by King Christian IX. The United States Senate, however, failed to ratify it, mainly because of the political feud between President Andrew Johnson and Congress.<sup>2</sup>

Plans to purchase the Danish West Indies were revived during the Harrison and Cleveland administrations; but nothing of a definite nature was done until, in 1898, when the United States was entering the arena of world imperialism, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, headed by Senator Lodge, urged the acquisition of the islands as a naval and coaling station. The Lodge report emphasized the strategic importance of the islands as follows:

"From a military point of view the value of these islands to the United States can hardly be overestimated. We have always been anxious to have a good naval and coaling station in the West Indies. Important in time of peace, such a station would be essential to our safety in time of war. . . . The fine harbor of St. Thomas fulfils all the required naval and military conditions."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Congress, 57:1; "Sen. Doc." 284, p. 10, 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

The Lodge report referred to the opinions of Captain A. T. Mahan, regarded as an authority on naval strategy. Of the island of St. Thomas Captain Mahan said: "It remains still a desirable position for the United States to obtain. If it had come into her possession . . . there would have been matter for serious consideration whether it or Culebra were the more advantageous as an advance base, secondary or subservient to Guantanamo. My study of the two, though not exhaustive, inclines me decidedly in favor of St. Thomas both for situation and for defensive strength based upon topographical conditions. To these is to be added the offensive value that results from greater ease of handling a battle fleet, and greater security of egress owing to hydrographic conditions."<sup>1</sup>

On the basis of the Lodge report, Congress authorized President McKinley to buy the Virgin Islands from Denmark. Secretary Hay negotiated a treaty for their purchase at \$5,000,000. This time the Senate ratified the treaty but the Danish Rigsdag failed to ratify it.<sup>2</sup>

In 1902 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee again reported in favour of buying the islands. The report emphasized the strategic value of the islands, pointing out that St. Thomas is "an important coaling station and depot of trade with the West Indies," and that its harbour is excellent. "These islands," the report added, "together with Porto Rico, are of great importance in a strategic way, whether the strategy be military or commercial." The Committee quoted a military report by Major Glassford of the United States Signal Corps in which he said:

"The island of St. Thomas offers conditions suitable for developing a first class military outpost. This island possesses all the natural advantages, enabling it to be converted into a second Gibraltar."<sup>3</sup> On the strength of these recommendations President Roosevelt submitted to the Senate on January

<sup>1</sup> Mahan, "Naval Strategy," p. 322.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Congress, 66:2; "House Doc." 734, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Congress, 57:1; "Sen. Doc." 284, pp. 11-12.

27, 1902, a treaty with Denmark for the purchase of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix for \$5,000,000. Again the scheme fell through.<sup>1</sup>

### 9. *Purchasing the Islands*

The completion of the Panama Canal and the growing power of the United States in the Caribbean made possession of the Virgin Islands a cardinal point in the State Department's policy. In 1915 Maurice Francis Egan, the American Minister to Denmark, was instructed to open negotiations. Mr. Egan has told the story of these negotiations in his book "Ten Years Near the German Frontier."

Briefly, the story is as follows: The Wilson administration, like its predecessors, was impressed by the strategic importance of the islands. "Puerto Rico was of little value in a strategic way without the Danish Antilles. A cursory examination of the map will show that Puerto Rico, with no harbors for large vessels and its long coast line, would offer no defences against alien forces."<sup>2</sup> America's anxiety to have the islands was heightened by the European war. There was fear that Germany might seize Denmark and Danish possessions in the Caribbean. By the middle of 1915 "it was plain to all who read the signs of the times, that we could not long keep out of the war."<sup>3</sup>

Minister Egan was authorized to approach the Danish Foreign Minister on the subject of selling the islands. When the conversation opened the American Minister thought: "He will ask \$50,000,000. . . . He knows better than anybody that we shall be at war with Germany in less than a year." The American Minister "felt dizzy at the thought of losing the Gibraltar of the Caribbean."<sup>4</sup> However, instead of asking for \$50,000,000 the Danish Foreign Minister asked for only \$30,000,000, adding apologetically: "The price is dazzling, I know."

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Congress, 57: 1; "Sen. Doc." 284, pp. 1-6.

<sup>2</sup> Egan, "Ten Years Near the German Frontier," p. 239.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265.

Minister Egan replied: "My country is more generous even than she is rich. The translation must be completed before . . ." The Danish Foreign Minister understood the pause, according to Mr. Egan, who explains significantly that the United States "was neutral *then*." This was in 1915. The purchase of the Virgin Islands the following year appears to have been part of a war program prepared by the Wilson administration.<sup>1</sup>

Many Danes opposed the sale of the islands to the United States, and Minister Egan decided to overcome this opposition. When liberal Danish women objected that the United States was not democratic enough to give its women the vote, the American Minister staged a public lecture in Copenhagen in which he advocated woman suffrage. Another widespread objection, one which the Queen of Denmark shared, was that the United States would treat the Negroes in the Virgin Islands as it treated them in the South. The Danish Government insisted that a plebiscite be held in Denmark on the question of the sale. Shortly before the balloting a news dispatch from the United States brought the story of the brutal lynching of a Negro. Minister Egan prevented publication of the story.<sup>2</sup> The plebiscite in Denmark and another in the Virgin Islands both favoured cession to the United States. A treaty was signed in New York on August 4, 1916. It was ratified by the Senate and President Wilson and by the Danish Rigsdag, and proclaimed in January, 1917.<sup>3</sup>

By this treaty Denmark ceded to the United States for \$25,000,000 the islands of St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix, together with the adjacent islands and rocks. The United States bound itself to maintain the concessions granted by the Danish Government in the islands, covering chiefly harbour improvement, telephone, telegraph and electric lighting.

The treaty also provided that Danish citizens residing in the islands might remain there or leave at will, retaining in either

<sup>1</sup> Egan, *supra*, p. 266.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 268-88.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. "Treaty Series," no. 629.

event their property rights. In case they remained, they were entitled to all their rights under the local laws then in force. Those who remained in the islands were permitted to preserve their Danish citizenship by making a declaration to that effect before a court of record. However, unless they did so, within a year after exchange of treaty ratifications, they would be presumed to have renounced Danish citizenship and to have accepted citizenship in the United States.

#### 10. *Naval Rule*

No such detailed provisions were made for over 20,000 native Negroes who were bought by the United States with the islands. Article Six of the treaty stipulated that "the civil rights and political status of the inhabitants of the islands shall be determined by the Congress." Congress has not yet taken permanent action under this clause. Instead, a temporary naval dictatorship was established by the Act of March 3, 1917, replacing the civil government which the natives had under Danish rule. This Act provided that:

"All military, civil and judicial powers necessary to govern the West Indian Islands acquired from Denmark shall be vested in a Governor and such persons as the President may appoint, and shall be exercised in such manner as the President shall direct until Congress shall provide for the government of said islands:

*Provided*, that the President may assign an officer of the army or navy to serve as such Governor and perform the duties appertaining to said office, *and provided further*, that the Governor of said islands shall be appointed by and with the advice and consent of the Senate; *and provided further* that the compensation of all persons appointed under this Act shall be fixed by the President."

Although naval rule was established as a temporary measure it still exists, eight years after the islands were bought, and seven years after the armistice. The Colonial Councils existing under Danish rule have been continued, but they are under the complete domination of the naval governor who can veto their acts or dissolve them at any time. The usual conditions of a quasi-military dictatorship have followed. Officers of the

army and navy have been appointed judges.<sup>1</sup> The naval governor of the Virgin Islands, Admiral Oman, deposed Judge Malmin during the latter's absence in the United States. The United States Circuit Court sent Malmin back, but President Harding intervened, and Judge Malmin was forced to give up his office and to return to the United States. In 1922 Admiral Kittelle, who succeeded Admiral Oman as governor of the Virgin Islands, tried to force the Colonial Council to give him the power to depose judges. When the Council refused he dissolved it.<sup>2</sup>

The early days of American occupation were marked by savage attacks on natives by American marines and sailors stationed in the islands. Though the situation has improved in that respect, there is great dissatisfaction among the natives because the Virgin Islands police, the rank and file of whom are native Negroes, cannot arrest marines and sailors, and the insular courts cannot try them. Under Danish rule the courts of the islands had authority over soldiers and sailors in public places. This is the case in the United States and almost everywhere else in the world.<sup>3</sup>

The fears expressed by the Danish queen and Danish Liberals in 1915 as to American treatment of Negroes have been justified by the introduction of race prejudice into the islands. Danish residents in the islands often married Negro women, and took them to Denmark when they returned. Negroes were invited to official and private social functions. Under American rule native Negroes have been subjected to a social ostracism which they had not known before.

The Naval Government has acted dictatorially in the Colonial Councils, the courts, and the press. In 1922, Rothschild Francis, editor of the *Emancipator* of St. Thomas, and local labour leader, was threatened with censorship because he had criticised editorially the action of the United States in Santo Domingo. The editor of the *St. Thomas Mail Notes* was fined and im-

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Attorney General, "Opinions," v. 31, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> "Federal Reporter," v. 272, p. 785.

<sup>3</sup> "Nation," v. 116, pp. 650-2.

prisoned for editorial comment. D. Hamilton Jackson, editor of the *St. Croix Labor Herald*, was sentenced for contempt of court for the publication of an article. In January, 1923, a native of the British West Indies was deported from St. Thomas for criticising the police department in the *Emancipator*.<sup>1</sup>

One of the bitterest complaints of the natives has been regarding their political status. The State Department has ruled that the Virgin Islands are not a territory but a possession like the Philippines. Consequently the Constitution of the United States and all laws which are not locally applicable have no force in the islands.<sup>2</sup> In 1920 the State Department ruled that the citizenship status of the islanders is like that of the Filipinos. They are not citizens of the United States, and have not the civil and political status of citizens. Nevertheless they are American nationals, owing allegiance to the United States Government and wholly within that government's power. Passports issued to natives of the islands describe them as "inhabitants of the Virgin Islands entitled to the protection of the United States."<sup>3</sup> Under this decision, each of the 10,000 Virgin Islanders now residing in New York City is literally "a man without a country." He is not an American citizen; and since he is not an alien either, he cannot become a citizen through naturalization.

Natives may vote only for members of the Colonial Councils, the local legislatures established under Danish rule and retained by the Treaty of August 4, 1916. However, voting is restricted to men of twenty-five years or over owning real estate producing \$60 a year or having a personal income of at least \$300 a year. As wages in the islands are extremely low, this ruling excludes nearly all the industrial workers.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Nation," v. 116, p. 267.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. House For. Aff. Com., "Cession of Danish West Indian Islands," 1917, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Congress, 66:2; "House Doc." 734, pp. 31-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

As early as 1919 some officials at Washington favoured a change in the status of the islands. A joint congressional committee headed by Senator Kenyon was appointed to investigate conditions in the Virgin Islands. To this committee Secretary of the Navy Daniels wrote: "The Department feels that the time has arrived when some more permanent provision should be made for their government." The joint committee visited the islands and submitted a report early in 1920. After summarizing conditions in the islands the report declared: "It is the judgment of the commission that it is inexpedient to change the existing system of government at present."<sup>1</sup> The commission recommended that a change of government be postponed until the local laws were revised. The revision was completed in 1921 and has been in force ever since.

On the other hand, a Federal Commission appointed in 1924 by the Secretary of Labour to investigate industrial and economic conditions in the islands, recommended that "a new organic act should be passed, so as to authorize the adoption of a new code of laws based upon American ideals and calculated to insure an administration and enforcement of the laws in keeping with American practices. Especially, the courts should be so reorganized that in this important connection the people will enjoy a feeling of confidence, and every man however humble, be assured of 'his day in court.'" The Commission recommended particularly that the Appellate Court for the islands, which is now situated in Philadelphia, out of reach of poverty-stricken islanders, "be made more accessible."<sup>2</sup>

The report adds, however, that "the most perfect political system will not avail to relieve this distress unless founded upon an industrial and economic readjustment of the Virgin Islands." The Commission on its visit to the islands found "unemployment, inadequate wages and even hunger on every hand." Natives engaged in the coaling of vessels, two-thirds of them women, earn about \$1.20 a week, while living costs are

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Congress, 66:2; "House Doc." 734, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Virgin Islands, Commission to the, "Report," p. 26.

practically as high as in the United States. Sugar plantation workers receive about forty cents first class and twenty cents second class for a day of nine hours.<sup>1</sup>

When the United States took over the islands they were already running down hill economically. Since then the situation has grown progressively worse. St. Thomas is a port of call, not a port of entry. The Volstead Act and the Supreme Court ruling regarding the carrying of liquor under seal into United States ports has had the effect of diverting shipping from St. Thomas to competing foreign ports of the West Indies.<sup>2</sup> For lack of shipping, the bay rum industry, important to the islands, has declined. Economic distress has also been increased by the recent substitution of oil burning for coal burning ships; this has crippled St. Thomas as a coaling port.<sup>3</sup>

Attempts to obtain economic assistance and a permanent form of civil government have been made by natives. Active in this movement have been the two labour unions of the islands. One of these, at St. Thomas, is affiliated with the American Federation of Labor; the other at St. Croix is independent. A bill abolishing naval rule was drafted in 1924 by the Virgin Islands committee representing natives and American Liberals. It was introduced in the Senate on March 10 by request. The bill (1) provides for a permanent form of civil government for the Virgin Islands; (2) guarantees Bill of Rights similar to the one in effect in Porto Rico; (3) grants citizenship to natives residing in the Virgin Islands or in the United States; and (4) establishes a simplified form of local government.<sup>4</sup>

Meantime abuses under naval rule continue. In the summer of 1924 the natives protested to Governor Philip Williams and to President Coolidge against the appointment of District Attorney George Washington Williams to the post of District Judge in the islands. It was charged that Williams was a white

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> U. S. Congress, 66:2; "House Doc." 734, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> U. S. Congress, 68:1; "Senate Bill," 2786.

Marylander who had brought his racial prejudice to the islands; that in 1923 he had attempted to block the passage of Senate Bill 2786 granting the islands a civil government, and that the bitter feeling existing between him and the natives unfitted him for a judicial post. Despite these protests, Williams was appointed as District Judge.

Chief among the political critics of Williams has been Rothschild Francis, editor of the *Emancipator*, leader of the A. F. of L. labour union at St. Thomas, and a member of the Colonial Council, the local legislature. Francis and Williams have attacked each other in print. On January 6, 1925, Francis was arrested on a charge of criminal libel for publishing an editorial criticising the St. Thomas police department. He was brought for trial before Judge Williams, whose appointment he had actively opposed. It was urged that the political enmity between the judge and the defendant would prevent Williams from rendering a fair decision. Nevertheless, Judge Williams tried his critic without a jury and sentenced him to thirty days in jail for an editorial opinion. Francis appealed the case and criticised his conviction in the *Emancipator*, on the grounds that it was impossible for him to obtain a fair trial under the circumstances. For this editorial he was convicted of contempt of court by Judge Williams on April 25, 1925. In addition to these judicial abuses, the Colonial Council has been dissolved by the Governor for refusing to obey his orders. This is the second time under American naval rule that the local legislature has been dissolved. (For documents in the Francis case and dissolution of Colonial Council, see files of American Civil Liberties Union, 100 Fifth Avenue.)

## II. *Summarizing Imperial Policy*

Across Mexico and Central America, through the countries surrounding the Caribbean, as far west as the Philippines, in China and Turkey, the pioneers of the American Empire have been active during the past generation, laying economic and political foundations. There is one principle that dominates

the imperial policy on which these fore-runners have been acting. Senator Kenyon's Joint Committee crystallized it in a paragraph dealing with the Virgin Islands:

"It is, of course, generally understood that the United States did not purchase the Virgin Islands as an investment. They were purchased primarily for strategic purposes. St. Thomas and its harbor is the strongest and most easily fortified spot in the West Indies. It can be made for us both an impregnable fortress and a valuable commercial and shipping station."<sup>1</sup>

"An impregnable fortress and a valuable commercial and shipping station,"—military power and economic advantage: it is in these terms that practically the entire imperial program of any of the great modern industrial empires may be summarized. The pattern is simple. Its details and ramifications are endless. For its completion there are required, not months and years, but decades and generations. It is a structure based on deep-lying economic and social forces.

The Philippines lay in the path of these forces. They were conquered by the United States Army and added to the territory of the American Empire. The Virgin Islands were a part of the frame-work. They were bought and paid for, and are now ruled by the United States Navy. Nicaragua and Honduras, Haiti and Cuba, Santo Domingo and Porto Rico, Panama and Colombia are also within the area that falls logically to the share of the United States. They, too, have heard the tramp of United States marines or felt the diplomatic and economic pressure of which the marines are but the symbol.

<sup>1</sup> U. S. Congress, 66:2; "House Doc." 734, p. 7.