

Primary Sources: Philippines asks United States to not take it over (1898)

By New York Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 09.05.19

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Image 1. Kurz & Alison print of the Battle of Quingua, which was fought on April 23, 1899, in Quingua — now Plaridel, Bulacan, Philippines, during the Philippine–American War (1899–1902). Photo: Unknown, from the Public Domain/Wikimedia

Editor's Note: In 1898, Spain and the United States fought a brief war. This conflict is known as the Spanish-American War. When it was over, the two sides signed a peace treaty, called the Treaty of Paris because negotiations took place in that city. Under the terms of the treaty, Spain gave its longstanding colony of the Philippines to the United States.

On February 4, 1899, just two days before the U.S. Senate approved the treaty, fighting broke out between American forces and Filipino nationalists, who wanted independence rather than a change in colonial rulers. Nationalist forces were led by Emilio Aguinaldo.

The Philippine-American War lasted three years. It resulted in the deaths of more than 4,200 American and more than 20,000 Filipino combatants. As many as 250,000 Filipino civilians died from violence, famine and disease.

Before the war began, there was much debate within the United States over the idea of annexing the Philippines. Some felt the United States had no right to take over another country. Those who

did support annexation had a variety of reasons. Some hoped to find commercial opportunities in Asia. Others were concerned that the Filipinos would be unable to rule themselves. Yet others feared that if the United States did not take control of the islands, another power — such as Germany or Japan — might do so.

While Americans debated the annexation question, Filipino revolutionaries under Aguinaldo seized control of most of the Philippines' main island of Luzon. They then proclaimed the establishment of the independent Philippine Republic. When it became clear that U.S. forces were intent on establishing American colonial control over the islands, clashes between the two sides swelled into an all-out war.

The following article was published in The New York Times on December 25, 1898, under the title "PLEA OF THE FILIPINOS: Full Text of the Protest Against Our Taking the Island — Agoncillo Raises an Issue."

Full Text Of The Protest

PARIS, Dec. 16. — The following is the full text of the protest lodged with the American and Spanish Peace Commissions. It was submitted by Felipe Agoncillo, the agent of Aguinaldo, the Filipino rebel leader:

Paris, 12th of December, 1898. To their Excellencies, the President and Delegates of the Spanish-American Peace Commission, Paris:

Your Excellencies: General Aguinaldo, President of the Philippine Republic, and his Government have honored me with the post of the official representative to the President and Government of the United States of America. My appointment has given me the duty of protesting any and all resolutions passed by the Peace Commission in Paris that are contrary to the independence of the Philippines.

The Commission has already ended its sessions. Those resolutions it has passed cannot be accepted by my government. The Commission has not heard from the Philippine Nation, which has the absolute right to be heard in relation to anything that might affect its future.

I, therefore, protest any resolution agreed upon at the Peace Conference in Paris as long as the political independence of the Filipino people is entirely unrecognized. I must reject all attempts to force on the people of the Philippines any resolutions that have not been approved by them. They are the only ones who can legally decide as to their future in history.

"The Union Of Spain And The Philippines "

Spain has absolutely no right to decide what the future of the Philippines will be. The union of Spain and the Philippines was founded solely on two documents, in which the right of the Filipinos to decide their own destiny was recognized.

The first was the "Blood Treaty" (Pacto de Sangre) of the 12th of March, 1565. This treaty was entered into between General Don Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and the Filipino ruler Sikatuma. It was confirmed on the one side by the king of Spain, Philip II, and on the other side by the monarchs of Mindanao, Visayas, and Luzon, and by the Supreme Chief of that Confederation

the Sultan Lacandola. The treaty established the self-governing character of the Philippines, then known as the kingdom of "New Castille," under the authority of the king of Spain.

The second document tying Spain to the Philippines was the so-called "Constitution of Cadiz" of 1812. This short-lived Spanish Constitution covered not only Spain but all those territories that made up the Spanish Empire. It was written with the active participation of deputies of the Filipino people. It declared "The Spains" to be a single nation.

But from the very first moment in which the Spanish attempted to force their absolute control on the islands, the Filipinos protested energetically by force of arms. Spain's first attempt came in 1814 after the Constitution of Cadiz was overthrown. At that moment, the struggle to defend Filipino political independence was born.

Quiz

- 1 Many Americans opposed the annexation of the Philippines. In 1898, they formed the Anti-Imperialist League. Why did the Anti-Imperialist League MOST likely oppose American expansion? >1. Taking control of the Philippines went against the self-rule and democracy upon which the country was founded.

1. They were against the United States becoming an empire like European countries.
2. They wanted to bring foreign workers from the Philippines to the United States to fill important jobs.
3. Taking control of the Philippines would upset Spain, who had the country as a colony since the 1500s.

- (A) 1 and 2
(B) 1 and 3
(C) 2 and 3
(D) 3 and 4

- 2 Read the following paragraph from the introduction [paragraphs 1-6].

Before the war began, there was much debate within the United States over the idea of annexing the Philippines. Some felt the United States had no right to take over another country. Those who did support annexation had a variety of reasons. Some hoped to find commercial opportunities in Asia. Others were concerned that the Filipinos would be unable to rule themselves. Yet others feared that if the United States did not take control of the islands, another power — such as Germany or Japan — might do so.

What conclusion is BEST supported by the paragraph above?

- (A) Some who supported annexation by the United States were German and Japanese people who wanted power in the Philippines.
- (B) Some who supported annexation by the United States did so because of their own interests in the Philippines.
- (C) People who opposed annexation of the Philippines thought the United States was doing so to set up businesses in Asia.
- (D) People who opposed annexation felt that the Philippines had been treated unfairly in the negotiations in Paris.

- 3 The article states that Filipino revolutionaries saw the U.S. as a colonial ruler. Which factor MOST likely influenced this perspective? 1. The Filipino people were interested in American business opportunities. 2. The U.S. did not invite Filipinos to the meeting with Spain about the Philippines. 3. The Filipino people sided with Spain and wanted Spain to maintain control of the Philippines. 4. The U.S. kept a large army in the Philippines after signing the treaty with Spain.

- (A) 1 and 2
(B) 1 and 3
(C) 2 and 3
(D) 3 and 4

Read the list of sentences from the article.

1. *The union of Spain and the Philippines was founded solely on two documents, in which the right of the Filipinos to decide their own destiny was recognized.*
2. *This treaty was entered into between General Don Miguel Lopez de Legazpi and the Filipino ruler Sikatuma.*
3. *The treaty established the self-governing character of the Philippines, then known as the kingdom of "New Castille," under the authority of the king of Spain.*
4. *But from the very first moment in which the Spanish attempted to force their absolute control on the islands, the Filipinos protested energetically by force of arms.*

Which two sentences taken together provide the BEST evidence to support the idea that Filipinos had some power to make their own decisions before the Spanish-American War?

- (A) 1 and 3
- (B) 2 and 3
- (C) 1 and 4
- (D) 2 and 4

- 5 The U.S. paid Spain \$20 million for the Philippines. In comparison, the U.S. paid a little over \$7 million for Alaska and \$15 million for the Louisiana Purchase. The U.S. ruled the Philippines until 1946, when the Filipinos became self-governing. How did the age of imperialism influence the United States' relationship with the Philippines?

- (A) The U.S. was always committed to setting up democracy for the Filipino people.
- (B) The Philippines became a good investment compared to the Alaska purchase.
- (C) The Philippines became a good investment compared to the Louisiana Purchase.
- (D) The U.S. believed it had to keep the Philippines to stop other European countries from taking over.

- 6 Which of the following MOST influenced the start of the Filipino political independence movement?

- (A) the "Blood Treaty" of 1565
- (B) the Spanish-American War of 1898
- (C) the failure of Felipe Agoncillo's protest
- (D) the overturning of the "Constitution of Cadiz"

- 7 Which question does the article BEST answer?

- (A) What major events led up to the declaration of war between the United States and Spain?
- (B) What about its history with Spain makes the Philippines ready for self-government?
- (C) Why did the Spanish decide to take over the Philippines rather than other islands?
- (D) Did American control of the Philippines cause Japanese attacks during World War II?

8 According to the article, why did Felipe Agoncillo write the letter of protest to the Peace Commissions?

- (A) to argue that the Treaty of Paris was invalid because it ended the close bond the Philippines shared with Spain
- (B) to argue that the Philippines held the right to decide its own future and should have been included in the Paris negotiations
- (C) to protest the deaths of up to 250,000 Filipinos from violence, famine and disease during the Philippine-American War
- (D) to protest the annexation of the Philippines' main island and the only one the Filipinos wanted absolute freedom in