

SPEECH
OF
His EXCELLENCY MANUEL L. QUEZON
PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES
ON
FILIPINO NATIONAL LANGUAGE

[Radiocast from Malacañan Palace, Manila, on Rizal Day, December 30, 1937]

My Fellow-Citizens:

It affords me an indescribable satisfaction to be able to announce to you that on this the 41st anniversary of the martyrdom of the founder and greatest exponent of Philippine nationalism, I had the privilege of issuing, in pursuance of the mandate of the Constitution and of existing law, an Executive Order designating one of the native languages as the basis for the national language of the Filipino people. The Executive Order is as follows:

MALACANAN PALACE
MANILA

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

EXECUTIVE ORDER No. 134

PROCLAIMING THE NATIONAL LANGUAGE OF THE PHILIPPINES
BASED ON THE "TAGALOG" LANGUAGE

Whereas, by virtue of the provisions of Commonwealth Act Numbered One hundred eighty-four enacted for the purpose of carrying out the constitutional mandate contained in section three, Article XIII, of the Constitution enjoining the adoption of a national language based upon one of the existing native tongues, the President of the Philippines, on January twelfth, nineteen hundred and thirty-seven appointed the following to constitute the Institute of National Language created under said Act:

Jaime C. de Veyra (Samar-Leyte Visayan), Chairman
Santiago A. Fonacier (Ilocano), member
Filemon Sotto (Cebu Visayan), member
Casimiro F. Perfecto (Bicol), member
Felix S. Salas Rodriguez (Panay Visayan), member
Hadji Butu (Moro), member
Cecilio Lopez (Tagalog), member and Secretary

Whereas, the Institute of National Language adopted on the ninth day of November, nineteen hundred and thirty-seven, a resolution as follows:

"Whereas, the National Assembly, in accordance-with constitutional mandate, passed Commonwealth Act No. 184 establishing an Institute of National Language;

"Whereas, the President of the Philippines, in accordance with sections 1 and 2 of said law, appointed on January 12, 1937, the members to compose the Institute who assumed their duties immediately after appointment;

"Whereas, in fulfillment of the purpose of evolving and adopting a common national language based on one of the existing native dialects, and complying with the conditions and proceedings to be observed by the Institute in the discharge of its duties, as set forth in section 5 of said law, the Institute has made studies of Philippine tongues in general;

"Whereas, in the light of these studies the members of the Institute have come to the conclusion that among the Philippine languages, the Tagalog is the one that most nearly fulfills the requirements of Commonwealth Act No. 184;

"Whereas, this conclusion represents not only the conviction of the members of the Institute but also the opinion of Filipino scholars and patriots of divergent origin and varied education and tendencies who are unanimously in favor of the selection of Tagalog as the basis of the national language as it has been found to be used and accepted by the greatest number of Filipinos not to mention the categorical views expressed by local newspapers, publications, and individual writers; and

"Whereas, the constitutional mandate mentioned above may be carried out without detraction from the requirements of section 1, subsection 8 of the Ordinance appended to the Constitution which provides:

" 'The Government of the Commonwealth, of the Philippines shall establish and maintain an adequate system of public schools, primarily conducted in the English language';

"Now, therefore, be it resolved,, as it is hereby resolved, that the Institute of National Language in harmony and in compliance with section 7 of Commonwealth Act No. 184, select as it hereby selects the Tagalog language to be used as the basis for the evolution and adoption of the national language of the Philippines;

"Be it further resolved, that the Institute of National Language recommend to His Excellency, the President of the Philippines, the adoption of Tagalog as the basis of the national language of the Philippines, and that such an adoption of the Philippine National Language shall not be understood as in any way affecting the requirement that the instruction in the public schools shall be primarily conducted in the English language."

Now, therefore, I, Manuel L. Quezon, President of the Philippines, by virtue of the powers vested in me by law, pursuant to the provisions of section seven of Commonwealth Act Numbered One hundred eighty-four, and upon the recommendation of the Institute of National Language set forth in the resolution above transcribed, do hereby approve the adoption of Tagalog as the basis of the national language of the Philippines, and hereby declare and proclaim the national language so based on the Tagalog dialect, as the national language of the Philippines.

This Order shall take effect two years from the date of its promulgation.

Done at the City of Manila, this thirtieth day of December, in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and thirty-seven, end of the Commonwealth of the Philippines, the third.

MANUEL L. QUEZON
President of the Philippines

By the President:
ELPIDIO QUIRINO
Secretary of the Interior

Rizal, in his patriotic efforts to foster Philippine nationalism, put in the mouth of Simon, addressing Basilio, the following words: "Spanish will never be the language generally spoken in the country; the people will never speak it. Each people has its own language as it has its own way of thinking. You are trying hard to divest yourselves of your own personality as a people; you forget that as long as a people preserves its language, it retains a token of its liberty, just as a man retains his freedom so long as he preserves his own independence of thought. A language expresses the ideas and ideals of a people."

Hence, in deciding to adopt a national language culled from the different languages spoken in the Philippines and mainly from the Tagalog which was not only the native tongue of Rizal but also is the most developed of all the existing languages in our country, we are merely carrying - into realization one of -the ideals of our national hero as a means of consolidating and invigorating our national unity.

For over three hundred years that Spain exercised sovereignty over the Philippines, Spanish was the official language; nevertheless, when the United States took possession and control of these Islands, Spanish had not become the common language of our people. With the establishment of the American regime, English became the official language of our country; but despite the fact that English has been taught in all our public schools for more than a generation, it has not become the language of our people. Today there is not one language that is spoken and understood by all the Filipinos, nor even by a majority of them, which simply proves that while the teaching of a foreign language may be imposed upon a people, it can never replace the native tongue as a medium of national expression among the common masses. This is because, as Rizal asserted, the national thought takes its roots in a common language which, develops and grows with the progress of the nation. We may borrow for a time the language of other peoples, but we cannot truly possess a national language except through the adoption, development and use of one of our own.

It is unnecessary for me to demonstrate how essential it is for our people to have one language that can be used by all in their daily intercourse. Such language cannot be either English or Spanish, except perhaps, if ever, only after many generations and at a very great cost. We cannot wait that long. We must as soon as possible be able to deal with one another directly using the same language. We need its power more completely to weld us into one strong nation. It will give inspiration and warmth to our popular

movements and will accord to our nationality a new meaning to which we have never learned to give full and adequate expression. As President of the Philippines, many times I have felt the humiliation of having to address the people through an interpreter in those provinces of the Islands where either Ilocano, Visayan, Pampango or Bicol is the language used.

The fact that we are going to have our national language does not mean that we are to abandon in our schools the study or the use of the Spanish language, much less English which, under, our Constitution, is the basis of primary instruction. Spanish will preserve for us our Latin culture and will be our point of contact with our former metropolis as well as with Latin America; English, the great language of democracy, will bind us forever to the people of the United States and place within our reach the wealth of knowledge treasured in this language.

There was a time when it seemed that it would be impossible for the Filipinos to agree that one of the native languages be chosen as the national language, but at last we "have all realized that if we are willing to accept, a foreign language as the official language of the Philippines, with more reason we should accept one of our own languages as the national language of our - common country. Without giving undue importance to the rôle that a common language plays in the life of a people, we may point to the fact that in the Orient the one nation which has made the greatest progress and which has won a high place in the family of nations, is the only nation that has one common language— Japan. And every other nation which has attained the highest state of culture, solidarity and power, both on the American continent and in Europe, and even in Africa, is a nation that possesses a common national language.

Today, with the adoption of Tagalog as the basis for the national language of the Philippines, we have accomplished one of the most cherished dreams of Rizal.

In no better way could we have honored his sacred memory on this anniversary of his immolation to the cause of our free nationhood.

I wish you all a Happy New Year.