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SPRUANCE URGES FILIPINO REFORMS

Departing U.S. Envoy Advises
Land Tax Shift as Essential
to Nation's Progress

Special to The New York Times.

MANILA, April 1—After three years as United States Ambassador, Admiral Raymond A. Spruance left Manila today for home. He gave a piece of parting advice to the Filipinos on land reform, which he considers essential to the progress and orderly development of the nation.

The Philippines, he said, in an interview, has a great deal of unproductive land whose owners are content to let it remain idle while the pressures of an increasing population increase its value.

"Remember that in the Philippines the assessed value of land property is sometimes as low as 10 per cent of its selling value, he said. "Land taxes are rarely more than 1½ to 2 per cent of assessed value. On top of that the percentage of people who pay no taxes at all is large."

Sees Benefit From Taxes

Admiral Spruance believes that sensibly increased assessment and taxation would induce landowners to sell their relatively unproductive property to those who would work it more productively. The Government, he holds, would benefit from the increased taxes and the nation would benefit from the increased production and employment.

Ambassador Spruance fully realizes that strong opposition to effective land reform measures would be encountered. The present system of land tenure is an inheritance from Spanish practices. The nobles and favorites acquired tax-free lands from the

Spanish Crown. They allowed the peasants to work it under the old feudal system while they gathered the profits of production. When the feudal system went out, parts of its structure remained.

But Admiral Spruance believes that President Ramon Magsaysay, with his great popularity, could get a land-reform program passed by Congress despite opposition.

Mr. Magsaysay agrees with Admiral Spruance, but so far has confined his attacks to opening new public lands, encouraging resettlement and getting a larger part of the produce for sharecroppers. No land-tax measure is at present before Congress.

A Great Naval Career

Admiral and Mrs. Spruance flew to Hong Kong where they are to board a steamer for a leisurely trip across the Pacific to their home in Monterey, California, where his retirement was interrupted in 1952 at the request of President Truman.

Admiral Spruance has a great naval career behind him. As commander of the task force at the Battle of Midway he is credited by many naval historians as being chiefly instrumental in turning the tide of the war in the Pacific. He later became Commander in Chief of the Pacific Fleet and was retired in 1948 as president of the Naval War College.

In the Philippine he has become known as a "quiet Ambassador," and for his extremely rare public pronouncements and appearances. A Manila newspaper paid this tribute to him: "Rarely in the public eye, never in the limelight, his successful discharge of duties as Ambassador is reflected in the present state of cordial relations between the two countries. They never were better."

Admiral Spruance's successor, former Senator Homer Ferguson of Michigan, is expected to assume his post here about April 10.