

McKinley did not recognize the Filipinos' right to self-government. In 1899 he explained his reasons for opposing American imperialism in an article in a widely read magazine, the *North American Review*. He contrasted American traditions of self-government with the refusal to grant this right to the Philippines and chastised the United States for misunderstandings about the people of the islands. Not until 1903, after a war that took the lives of more than 4,000 American soldiers and 100,000 Filipinos, was American control of the Philippines secured. Aguinaldo himself lived until 1964.

WE FILIPINOS HAVE all along believed that if the American nation at large knew exactly, as we do, what is daily happening in the Philippine Islands, they would rise en masse, and demand that this barbaric war should stop. There are other methods of securing sovereignty—the true and lasting sovereignty that has its foundation in the hearts of the people. . . . And, did America recognize this fact, she would cease to be the laughing stock of other civilized nations, as she became when she abandoned her traditions and set up a double standard of government—government by consent in America, government by force in the Philippine Islands. . . .

You have been deceived all along the line. You have been greatly deceived in the personality of my countrymen. You went to the Philippines under the impression that their inhabitants were ignorant savages. . . . We have been represented by your popular press as if we were Africans or Mohawk Indians. We smile, and deplore the want of ethnological knowledge on the part of our literary friends. We are none of these. We are simply Filipinos. . . . In the struggle for liberty which we have ever waged, the education of the masses has been slow; but we are not, on that account, an uneducated people. . . .

You repeat constantly the dictum that we cannot govern ourselves. . . . With equal reason, you might have said the same thing some fifty or sixty years ago of Japan; and, little over a hundred years ago, it was extremely questionable, when you, also, were rebels against

115. Emilio Aguinaldo on American Imperialism in the Philippines (1899)

Source: "Aguinaldo's Case against the United States," *North American Review*, No. 514 (September 1899), pp. 425–32.

President McKinley's decision to annex the Philippines rather than grant it independence led inexorably to a long, bloody war against Filipino nationalists, led by Emilio Aguinaldo. During the 1890s, Aguinaldo had served in local government under Spanish rule, but in 1895 he joined the movement that launched an armed uprising for Philippine independence. He was exiled in 1897 but, with American encouragement, returned to the islands in 1898 after the outbreak of the Spanish-American War and declared himself president. A believer in the ideals of the American Declaration of Independence, Aguinaldo was bitterly disappointed that

the English Government, if you could govern yourselves. . . . Now, the moral of all this obviously is: Give us the chance; treat us exactly as you demanded to be treated at the hands of England when you rebelled against her autocratic methods.

Now, here is a unique spectacle—the Filipinos fighting for liberty, the American people fighting them to give them liberty. The two peoples are fighting on parallel lines for the same object. We know that parallel lines never meet. Let us look back to discover the point at which the lines separated. . . . You declared war with Spain for the sake of Humanity. You announced to the world that your program was to set Cuba free, in conformity with your constitutional principles. . . .

You entered into an alliance with our chiefs at Hong Kong and at Singapore, and you promised us your aid and protection in our attempt to form a government on the principles and after the model of the government of the United States. . . . In combination with our forces, you compelled Spain to surrender. . . . Joy abounded in every heart, and all went well . . . until . . . the Government at Washington . . . commenc[ed] by ignoring all promises that had been made and end[ed] by ignoring the Philippine people, their personality and rights, and treating them as a common enemy. . . . In the face of the world you emblazon humanity and Liberty upon your standard, while you cast your political constitution to the winds and attempt to trample down and exterminate a brave people whose only crime is that they are fighting for their liberty.

Questions

1. Why does Aguinaldo think that the United States is betraying its own values?
2. In what ways does Aguinaldo think that Americans misunderstand the Filipinos?