ELPIDIO QUIRINO

THE

JUDGEMENT OF HISTORY

BY SALVADOR P. LOPEZ
in 1990, thirty-six years after his death, on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of his birth, it is possible to examine objectively the life and career of President Elpidio Quirino, identify his contributions to the country's progress and development, and determine his standing among the makers of Philippine history.

He did not wake up one morning to find himself at the pinnacle of power. He rose step by step from the lowest rung, and from this experience developed a degree of competence that was the envy of many and the reward of but a few.

He was the first President to propose industrialization as the basic strategy for progress and development, in terms of concrete program action.

He cherished and practiced the tenets of social justice and equity but not at the expense of individual rights, integrity, and self-respect.

He was an intrepid nationalist committed heart and soul to the defense of his country and the advancement of the national welfare, whatever the cost.

He favored the improvement of the life and welfare of the poor, the underprivileged, and the oppressed through peaceful reform, not by violent revolution.

He initiated the policy of establishing more equitable and just relations between the Philippines and the United States, without subservience or domination.

He strove to rectify the serious imbalance in the trade between the Philippines and the United States by imposing import controls, a radical measure which drove an American diplomat to make the arrogant and cynical comment: “The trouble with Quirino is that he is taking Philippine independence too seriously.” No Filipino President could wish or hope for a higher compliment than this.

He died a man of modest means, having avoided the unprincipled use of power to amass the perquisites of wealth and privilege for selfish ends.
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PRESIDENT ELPIDIO QUIRINO FOUNDATION
Time’s glory ... is to unmask falsehood, and bring Truth to light.  
–Shakespeare.
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Author’s Note

To write the Centennial Biography of Elpidio Quirino, President of the Republic of the Philippines (1948-1953) is a privilege that in the very nature of things temporal, comes but once in a lifetime. The occasion is at once an opportunity, a challenge and a privilege – an opportunity to sort out the tangled skein of truth that has twisted around an important figure of Philippine history, and come out of the experience intellectually challenged and emotionally rewarded.

The search for the genuine and enduring Quirino persona constitutes a challenge in the sense that it calls for a devotion to truth which can overcome the temptations of hearsay and prejudice as well as the inducements of goodwill and charity. The truth lies somewhere in between.

Elpidio Quirino was a strapping young man of twenty-one when I was born in Currimao, Ilocos Norte, a small town midway between Vigan and Laoag. Thus, a gap of one generation separated me from him, denying me the privilege as teacher, journalist and diplomat of knowing him at close range. But as aide to General Manuel A. Roxas in Corregidor and Mindanao during the war, and as deputy to Dr. Carlos P. Romulo in the United Nations after independence. I was able to observe from a distance Quirino’s performance as Vice-President and later as President with admiration and respect.

This attitude I have conserved through the passing years, noting with an impartial eye the quality of Quirino’s leadership and the measure of his performance, in the company of his peers from Roxas to Cory Aquino. This was the sentiment I brought with me that day in January 1956 when I decided to go and pay my respects to him in his place of quiet retreat in Novaliches, Quezon City.

Salvador P. Lopez
September 14, 1990
Chapter 1

History and Heritage

Under Spanish colonial rule, Vigan enjoyed a status of preeminence. Juan de Salcedo made it the base of his conquest of Northern Luzon, changing its native name to Villa Fernandina in honor of Prince Fernando, first-born son of King Philip II. Subsequently, it began to attract foreign settlers who imposed on the houses they built for themselves the images of their native land, thus enriching Vigan’s language and culture. Some of the Spaniards and Mexicans who came aboard the galleons that plied annually between Manila an Acapulco in the 17th century and who later settled in the Pampanga River Valley around the town of Masantol and Macabebe also found their way to Vigan. By 1810, Tomas de Comyn, factor of the Compania Real de Filipinas, estimated that there were about 12,000 mestizos in llocos, some of Spanish but mostly of Chinese origin out of a population of about 250,000. Some of these families had been in Vigan as early as 1800, living in a district separate from that of the naturales or native inhabitants.
In the last decade of the 19th century, the Spanish Queen proclaimed Vigan *Ciudad Muy Noble y Real* (Very Noble and Royal City), the distinguished title that had been given to Manila at the inception of Spanish colonial rule. Vigan was the seat of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, with a seminario-colegial, a girls’ school, and an ayuntamiento or autonomous town council.

William Henry Scott describes most of the town in the Ilocos by mid-18th century as one-street villages in which the residential houses, warehouses, stores, and markets were strung along the main highway. Vigan was an exception. It had 16 blocks of cobblestone streets and elegant residences.

The houses in the mestizo district were imposing two-story buildings. The first floor of these residences was laid out with granite slabs; at the center was the patio. Within this space there is a well for watering the flowering plants in celadon jars arranged around stone lions and jade dragons from China. Unlike houses in other town of the Philippines, the residences in Vigan had no balconies; they were built for solidity and permanence. Light came from sliding windows made of translucent squares of thin oyster shells or capiz. Entrance to these houses was through a door opening from the street into the ground floor which served as stall for the family’s horse-drawn carriages. The distinctive one-door calezas of Vigan were exported as far away as the Visayas.

Toward the last decade of the 19th century, as Spanish rule began to crumble, a corresponding ferment in Philippine society occurred. The insulares, consisting of the mestizos and the Sangleys, began to challenge openly the traditional political and the social roles defined for them by the colonial regime. At the same time, the Indios or naturals, realizing that he had become an important component of the economy, also started to seek redress of grievances against laws which they had previously accepted as part of the natural order of things.

These developments in the relationship between social classes were most dramatically acted out in Vigan where the different sectors of society had become so factionalized as to present a serious problem to the national administration.

At the beginning of 1889, *El Comercio* reported an increase of “evildoers” around Caoayan, which compelled the governor to order the town mayors to apprehend farmers “who appropriated as much as they could against landlords’ wishes”. On February 17, men entered the convent in Tagudin and attacked Fray Mariano Ortiz, leaving him for dead with 12 body wounds; and on 3 September 1891, a man walked into the office of the assistant forester in Vigan, pistol in hand, and calmly shot him and a guest in the groin. In 1893, all the barangay headmen of the neighboring town on Bantay demonstrated against the requirement of covering the taxes of absentees and deceased; in 1887 a popular uprising against the excesses of Fray Saturnino Pinto’s querida caused him to be transferred.

*El Comercio* reported that the attack on the government forester of Vigan had panicked the large Spanish colony of the city and expressed the hope that “an exemplary punishment will be meted out for the sake of their security and peace of mind:”

“Vigan was the natural seed-bed for the ferment,” records William Scott:
Unlike those “one-street villages” controlled by a few landholding families, many of its 16 city blocks were occupied by a new merchant class that had eclipsed the older aristocracy. In their upper echelon were members of Chinese mestizo families like carriage maker Primitivo Formoso and Gregorio Romero Sy-Qua, richest man in the town, if not for the whole Ilocos. An earlier generation had not challenged the older pattern but had migrated to build up fortunes abroad instead, many of them—like Francisco Rivero and Antonio Maria Regidor—doing so in remarkably short order. (When Regidor received his doctorate from UST, the rector unkindly alluded to the fact that he had arrived barefoot and had been clothed and shod by Dominican charity.) But the present generation found sufficient scope of its talents in politicking and plotting at home. For one thing, Vigan was unique in its ecclesiastical government: Ilocos Friars were Augustinians but the bishop was not; the cathedral parish was one of few in the Ilocos with a Filipino for a parish priest; and the cathedral was staffed by secular clergy who included both Filipinos and Spaniards. And, for another, the foreign community added an element of often acrimonious rivalry between Filipino Spaniards born in the colony and proud peninsulares from Spain to the ready-made faction of the official gremio de naturales (community of natives) and gremio de mestizo. It was a situation which presented an unusual variety of interest groups for creative political alignment.

Such an alliance between Ecclesiastical Notary Mena Crisologo and Episcopal Secretary Ramon Picabea, a Spanish secular priest, proved so troublesome in 1885 that the governor-general took steps to break it up. Their intrigues exploited personal rivalries, aggravated petty grievances, and sometimes concocted complaints that were false or dubious, often with the provincial governor himself as target. They counted among their allies not only powerful proprietors like Gregorio Sy-Quia and the political rivals of incumbent mestizo gobernadorcillos Primitivo Formoso and Jose Rivero, but the whole cathedral staff, the Filipino parish priests or coadjutors of Vigan, Bantay, Caoayan, and San Vicente, and Augustinian friars Jose Vasquez of Magsingal and Isidoro Saez of Lapog. Picabea in turn was passionately supported by Recollect Bishop Mariano Cuartero who was at the time locked in a conflict with the Augustinian provincial in Manila so vicious the Bureau of Telecommunications was ordered not to accept any more of their telegrams. The turmoil ended, temporarily at least, with Picabea’s deportation and the bishop’s death, though not before two Augustinians had been excommunicated in a case drawn up by Ecclesiastical Notary Crisologo. But when the revolution broke out in 1896, Gregorio Sy-Quia was alcalde of the ayuntamiento and Mena Crisologo was its sindico (legal representative). Both were among the first to be arrested and tortured.

Gregorio was the eldest son of Vicente Romero Sy-Quia, a native of Amoy, China, who, on the insistence of the family of his wife, had himself baptized with a Christian name before his marriage to Petronila Encarnacion of Vigan. Gregorio himself married Estefania Angco, daughter of a wealthy Sangley in Vigan, Justo Angco. Justo gave as dowry to his daughter the mansion that subsequently became the residence of Alicia and Elpidio Quirino when they got married in 1921.
The Quirinos were originally the Del Rosarios of Vigan, descendant of Juan del Rosario of Abra who owned a fleet of pontins or sailboats used for coastwise trading. Attracted by the populous town of Vigan, he moved to Caoayan, then a district of Vigan where he married a second time. Mariano, his son by the second marriage, entered the military profession. The latter’s excellent service earned for him the rank of sargento contador, the highest position a native could hold in the colonial army.

Mariano’s regiment was assigned to Cotabato where the Muslims were in periodic revolt against the Spanish government. On the basis of his excellent service, he was chosen to go to Spain for military schooling. In the course of a visit to Agoo, La Union, however, he met and fell in love with Gregoria Rivero, a 14-years old Spanish mestiza. After their marriage, Mariano applied for retirement. Events in the archipelago were taking a turbulent turn. He brought his young bride to Caoyan where he took over his father’s trading business. When the position of jail warden fell vacant, Mariano applied for the job. Having been a former non-commissioned officer in the colonial army, he was appointed to the position. The jail administered by Mariano was a two-story brick building; the second floor was the residence of the senior warden. There, on November 16, 1890, Elpidio Quirino was born.

Two years later, in 1892, the Katipunan was organized in Manila. Although there is no evidence that it had members in the Ilocos before the revolution, the organization had some Ilocano members in other places. Artemio Ricarte, a school teacher from Batac, Ilocos Norte, for instance was an original member of the Magdiwang faction in Cavite, and his cousin, father Gregorio Aglipay founded the Liwanag branch in Victorias, Tarlac. As soon as the existence of the Katipunan became known, the Spanish friars denounced it as the terrorist arm of Masonry. As most members of the elite were suspected to be Masons, the Spanish priest in the Ilocos began to concentrate their attention on members of prominent families.

The Katipunan was betrayed on August 1896; the revolution began a week later, on the 26th. The bishop of Nueva Segovia alerted the Spanish clergy to be on the lookout for subversives. A reign of terror swept the Ilocos as Filipino suspects were arrested and tortured into signing concocted confessions implicating members of prominent families. Mena Crisologo, Gregorio Sy-Quia, and Father Mariano Dacanay resisted signing confessions. Mariano Quirino was among those questioned as suspects. After the interrogation, he resigned as jail warden, piled all his belonging in four karitons and, with his entire family, headed for Agoo where they stayed for the duration of the revolution and the Philippine-American war.

The American occupation of the Ilocos on 18 November 1899 when Gen. Samuel B.M Young and a detachment of cavalry went on a forced march from Pozorrubio, Pangasinan to Rosario, La Union in pursuit of Aguinaldo. At the same time the US battleship Oregon and two former Spanish gunboats, the Callao and Samar anchored at Vigan and on the 26th shelled the sand dunes at Caoayan for one whole hour. Then the Oregan organized a group of 201 sailors who went ashore.

Because of the persistent guerrilla activities of prominent revolutionary leaders including Gregorio Aglipay, Joaquin Alejandro, Benito Natividad, Vicente Salazar, Manuel Tinio and Blas and Juan Villamor, the American occupation of the
Ilocos was markedly harsh and violent. Such a policy was apparently provoked by the hostile attitude of the people who continued to give their loyal support to the guerrillas. American reaction to this may be gleaned from a proposed method of preventing communication between rebels and civilians published in the Army and Navy Journal:

The cheapest and most humane method of doing this is to compel every farmer who lives more than a mile from the nearest town occupied by troops to bring his rice crop and store it in the town where it can easily be guarded. Receipt to each one for all he brings in, make him prove how many there are in his family, and then issue him a certain amount each week much on the same lines we used to issue to the Indians.

In the year 1901, US scouting teams were ordered to seek and destroy all supplies intended for the insurgents. Rice burning was begun in the first three months of the year – 2,200 kilograms were destroyed in the hills near Vigan; 15,000 kilos in Pilar, and 40,770 in Vintar, Ilocos Norte, while 107,520 kilos were confiscated rather than burned in Cabugao, Santo Domingo, and Sinait, Ilocos Sur. Although Agoo did not seem to figure prominently in the resistance of the Ilocanos to US rule, one of Elpidio’s vivid recollections was stepping over the dead bodies of Filipino rebels in the town plaza of Aringay after fighting with the Gringoes had ceased. While his family in Agoo was spared from the violence of the war, it shared the consequences of the aftermath.

Hostilities in the Ilocos between Filipinos and Americans ended in 1901, with the surrender of Tinio, Aglipay, Salazar, and Villamor. Two years before, early in January 1899, President McKinley had created a commission to study the general situation in the Philippines and submit appropriate recommendations. With Jacob G. Schurman as head, the commission upon reaching Manila issued a proclamation which was to govern the relationship between Filipinos and their American colonial rulers. Of the 11 regulatory principles laid down, the crucial tenth provided:

10. Effective provision will be made for the establishment of elementary schools in which the children of the people shall be educated.

Thus did the education of the Filipino in English begin with soldiers of the American Army who were ordered to teach the people in the town and villages as soon as they were pacified. The issue which America tried to address in the early phase of its rules was “first, to give the great mass of the population a primary education; second, to give an intermediate education of those who will constitute the substantial middle-class of the country; and third, to provide secondary and higher instruction to those who are to assume leadership in thought and action.”

The American policy of emphasizing education found a ready response among Filipinos. As early as 1900, for instance, Leon Ma. Guerrero spoke of the Filipino people’s aspirations when he delivered his inaugural address before the first institution of higher learning he had himself organized in Manila.

And that aspiration so deeply felt, we wish to fulfill ourselves, Filipinos that we are, as fellow countrymen of those young souls thirsting for knowledge, whose instruction we cannot, we must not, leave in the hands of foreign pedagogues who, however competent and talented, are in no position to understand the
fundamental needs and particular racial characteristic of our people, since we and they are always and inevitably separated by the thick fog of racial and philosophic prejudice and the distorting lens of political ideas and sentiment.

Seated beside him on that occasion was Ignacio Villamor, whose younger brother, Colonel Blas Villamor was one of the intransigent leaders of the resistance in the Ilocos. Six Months later, Villamor himself was asking his brother to surrender. A few years after the University of the Philippines was established 1908, Villamor became its first Filipino president.

The Quirinos were among the beneficiaries of the American colonial policy. Ernesto, the eldest of the children of Mariano who had gone to Manila to study law after the war, was chosen by the Bureau of Public Instruction as one of the first pensionados sent to the United States for further studies. Elpidio, on the other hand, went to a private school in Aringay under the supervision of Maestro Anastacio Aquino. Here he acquired a reputation among his classmates for his skill in drawing.

In 1904, after peace came to the Ilocos, Manuel Quirino decided to resume his coastwise trading activities. He brought his family to Pandan, a barrio adjacent to Caoyan, which had replaced the latter as seaport. Here he engaged in fishing, helped by his children, Elpidio among them. Many years later, as President, Elpidio would often leave Malacañang to cruise and fish in Lingayen Gulf, close to Agoo.

As soon as the American authorities opened a high school in Vigan, Elpidio was among the first to enroll. He also enrolled in drawing classes at the Universidad Ilocana. His skill in drawing was again confirmed when he won first prize in an art contest. The skill of Elpidio in this line appeared consistent. He gave free vent to his artistic talent, supplementing his meager budget by doing portraits. In high school, he was one of the illustrators of the graduating class manual.

In 1906, the authorities needed a teacher for the elementary school in Caparia-an, a barrio north of Agoo. Elpidio applied for the job and got it. This episode started him on the practice of studying and working at same time.

Caparia-an was five kilometers from Agoo. Elpidio had to travel on foot, crossing a creek which separated the barrio from the town. Years later, he would recall this episode in his life, imbuing it with the color of youthful illusions and memories. Once, while talking to newsmen in Malacañang, he confessed that while he found it difficult to walk the long and difficult road to school, he would imagine himself crossing the creek in the shoes of Abraham Lincoln walking across vast farmlands to go to school. Thus were many young Filipinos fascinated by the legends spread by the school system which enabled them to see themselves in the role of the great men of the Western world who rose from humble beginnings.

Elpidio received a teacher’s salary of 12 pesos a month. On payday, the municipal treasurer asked him to present his cedula. Quirino remonstrated that he was only 16 years old and had no cedula. When the treasurer persisted, he complained to the American Superintendent of school in Agoo, who waved technicalities and instructed the treasurer to pay Elpidio, saying: “If he’s old enough to teach, he’s old enough to be paid for it. ”

At the end of the semester, Elpidio went home to Vigan.
His mother, who had saved all the money he sent her, presented him with his entire salary: 60 Pesos.

"Mother, can you let me have P35 to buy a horse?" he asked. "The rest you can keep."

Soon he became a familiar figure in town, dashing from one end of it to the other on his horse. It was said that a girl in Caparia-an had caught his attention, which was the reason he applied to teach in the same school. However, soon after getting the job, he discovered that she had gone to accept another teaching assignment elsewhere. At about this time, his brother Ernesto had returned from the United States, bringing as gifts for Elpidio a pair of American shoes and a couple of flashy neckties. These presents must have aroused Elpidio’s dreams of success. A mishap with his horse provided him with an excuse to sell it, at a handsome profit. With the money, he sailed for Manila together with other ambitious, young Ilocanos.

Ernesto was surprised and concerned when Elpidio suddenly appeared at his boarding house on Lavezares Street, San Nicolas. Elpidio had been expressing interest in coming to Manila, but Ernesto tried to dissuade his brother. As the eldest of the Quirino children, Ernesto assumed responsibility for the education of the younger siblings. This had been traditional among Ilocano families. Ernesto’s concern was that, being titular head of the family, and having returned from the US only the year before, he was then only starting in his job. His salary was barely sufficient; he was sending part of it to Ilocos to help his parents.

But as subsequent events proved, Elpidio already had his own plan: he would work while studying. To this end, Ernesto helped to get him enrolled at the Manila High School.

Elpidio took the literary course, which was of the two then offered; the other was surveying which was open to those who had finished the first and second years of the literary course. He chose the literary course on account of Ernesto’s wish that he take up medicine in the University of the Philippines after graduation. Therefore, in addition to his regular subject, Elpidio took courses in German, Latin, French and Spanish. The last he was able to write and speak proficiently after two years, enabling him afterwards to communicate easily with the older members of the ilustrado class.

The curriculum of the literary course included five units of English, three of history, four of mathematics, five of science, and ten of languages. However, only seventeen units distributed among those five disciplines were required for graduation in high school.

The Manila High School was an old one-story wooden structure at the corner of Victoria and Muralla Streets in the Walled City (Intramuros). To reach school from San Nicolas, Elpidio would have to pay a two-centavo fare on the banca across the Pasig. He often walked across Del Pan Bridge to reach school whenever he was short of funds, although he was longer that way. As he confided to one of his early biographers, “I did not go home for lunch, but I ate in a corner Chinese sari-sari store, and in the afternoon, after classes, I walked home.”

Intramuros at that time was described by an English visitor as a “forbidding monastic town” with its decaying residences, churches and convents.
“The Streets of the Walled City,” observed another foreign visitor, “are in a class by themselves. Narrow, Dark, and Gloomy, there is an air of mystery and tragedy about them that suggests a good story if one only knew where to find it. The overhead passage ways between the convents, the tight barred windows, the strong walls, and the high churches, all combine to enforce the idea that the city was built for protection and not for looks.”

He added that the life of Intramuros was not to be seen on the streets but on the “entresuelos” or interiors. “There are now eleven thousand people living in Intramuros,” he wrote in 1908, “but in the old days of terror a hundred and fifty thousand were crowded into the city for safety.”

It was in Intramuros where the exclusive schools and colleges where concentrated. The three-centuries-old royal and pontifical University of Santo Tomas stood right next to the office of the American governor-general. Noting that “modern commercial affairs are handled in the offices that would not be used for stables in any American city,” our American visitor nevertheless concluded his peregrination of the old Walled City: “One may stand at the foot of the bridge and see three centuries in a much mixed up jumble of things too old to be used, or too new to be useful.”

It was this sense of history, and of being at the very center of events that attracted ambitious provincial young men and women and women to Manila. At the Manila High School where the scions of rich hacenderos of Visayas, old families of Batangas, Laguna and Bulacan, landed gentry and aspiring middle-class families everywhere around the country. Elpidio’s class specially was later adjudged the single class that had produced the greatest number of outstanding Filipino leaders, which included Jose P. Laurel, Jose Yulo, Basilio Valdes, Hermogenes Concepcion, Vicente Cailles, etc.

Elpidio was described by this time as a “handsome and gifted young man” with bright eyes and hair parted to the left “to emphasize his curls”. His youthful countenance bespoke a strong and dynamic personality. His brother Judge Tony Quirino recalls that Elpidio had a flair for deportment. Always he was well kempt and properly attired, and an aura of dignity surrounded him.

Like most of his classmates, he was strongly inclined to oratory, becoming a champion debater of his class. He was elected president of Cryptia Debating Club which competed on several occasions with the Rizal Debating Club of Manuel Roxas, who was Elpidio’s senior by one year.

As captains of their respective debating teams, Roxas and Quirino occasionally faced each other in forensic oratory and debate. Roxas was an eloquent speaker; Elpidio, on the other hand, was noted for his persuasive presentation of arguments, a devastating wit and a sense of humor. Whenever the two were scheduled to speak, the social hall of the Manila High School would be packed to capacity before the start of the program.

In one oratorical contest, Elpidio lost to Roxas. Although Quirino gave a fine declamation of Lincoln’s Gettysburg address, the judges awarded the price to Roxas for his delivery of the Speech of Spartacus to the Gladiators.

“There was nothing extraordinary in the student life of Elpidio, was noted for his persuasive presentation of arguments, a devastating wit and a sense of humor.
Quirino,” reported one biographer, quoting Elpidio himself as having said after becoming President: “I never aspired to be spectacular.” If the recognition which Elpidio won as an orator and debater was hardly extraordinary, it was by no means lackluster either. He was bright and popular and despite limited resources, he presented himself on special occasions in tastefully tailored clothes with dignity and aplomb. In his senior year he was class secretary, a member of Manila High School Tennis Club, and artist of the high school annual.

The literary course promoted among the students a love of reading, especially of the classics. Classical learning, as a matter of fact, was to become the basis of culture of what Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera called “La Rising Generation”, or the Fil-American middle class under the new dispensation. Greco-Roman culture, which have been excluded from the culture of the Indio under Spain, suddenly become part of the cultural heritage of the Filipino middle-class. Elpidio, said Judge Antonio Quirino, “had, early in life, a formulated philosophy.” Perhaps his early biographers over-simplified this information when two of them stated that Quirino’s democratic belief derived from his reading of Dr. Malden’s “Everyman a King”, and his nationalism from Wenceslao Retana’s “Vida y Escritos Del Dr. Jose Rizal”.

Nevertheless, it was in the Manila High School where Quirino seemed to have been impressed by passages from two separate sources, one in Spanish, the other from Polonius’ Speech to Laertes in “Romeo and Juliet.” The passages must have had a profound impact on his memory, for many years afterwards, as a Chief Executive, he could quote spontaneously the lines of Jose de Espronceda:

Antes de entrar en lid tu vervo ensaya
Y prueba tu vigor
Para scalar con triunfo el Himalaya
Se necesitan alas de Condor.
No escoches, no la voz de tur marasmo
Y hacia nombre ve;
No hay mejor espada que el entusiasmo
Ni almadura mas firme que la fe.

And this beat of Shakespearean wisdom:

Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar;
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch’d, unfledged’dr comrade. . .
Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,

Bear’re that th’ opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man’s censure, but reserve thy judgment.

It must have been under the spell of such classical didacticism that Elpidio wrote the following poem in his senior year in high school which, years later, as Chief Executive, he told a reporter he had adopted as creed:

I care what the world may seem
Not if the day is bright or dim
I do not count the pangs of years
Nor tell of hours I spent in tears;
Because I know God still sends
The light and warmth that I may need;
Because I know, I know God blends
The joys and tears to make my creed.

After Elpidio was settled in Manila, his parents joined him and Ernesto. He and his brother had been living at 414 Penarubia St., San Nicolas. When their parents came with his brothers, they transferred to a bigger house at No. 511, on the same street. Here Elpidio’s mother died and for a long time thereafter he mourned her death. Judge Quirino remembers that after her death Elpidio had to take over the care of the younger children. As Antonio was the youngest – there was a difference of 18 years between him and Elpidio – the latter used to feed him with a piece of cloth (cacha) Elpidio would mash rice gruel, and shaping the cacha in the form of nipple, would bring the food to his mouth, for him to suck.

Between his studies and taking care of his younger brothers, Elpidio also began looking for work. The pay of Ernesto was becoming insufficient for so large a family. Elpidio’s ability to draw enabled him to earn some extra money from time to time. Two of his sketches were used by the publications Filipino Youth Companion and Filipino Planter.

He got his first regular job as junior computer at the Bureau of Lands receiving 30 pesos a month. A year later he resigned and accepted a clerical position in the office of the high school principal which allowed him sufficient time for his studies.

Believing that a civil service eligibility would provide him stability and access to bigger jobs, he prepared for and took the first grade civil service examination, coming out among the topnotchers.

Quirino accepted the position of property clerk in the Manila Police Department which gave him a salary of 150 pesos a month, substantial amount at that time. As property clerk with two assistants, he was in charge of various pieces of property and equipment belonging to the police department. Elpidio, said Manuel Collas, a fellow student border in San Nicolas, was such a likable fellow that it was easy for him to get the positions he applied for.

“I learned to fight my own way, to value time,” Elpidio said while reminiscing his high school days. “I studied hard and started early in the battle of life.”

After completing the secondary course, Quirino prepared for a career. For a while, the wish of his mother that he become a priest bothered him. The priesthood, however, was a prestigious profession in his hometown. Without the Spanish “superiors” who used to appropriate the earning of secular priests, it would have provided the income which could have enabled Quirino to help his younger brothers.

To study the priesthood, however, was very expensive and Ernesto, who would have had to support him suggested painting instead. Elpidio had given proof of his artistic ability and talent. And in Ilocos, the legendary fame of Juan Luna was very much alive. But for Elpidio, a career in the arts had lost his fascination. Besides, considering how the Americans were governing the colony, it was becoming evident that the Filipinos would soon be allowed to assume more political and civil responsibility. Actually only four years were to pass before the so-called Filipinization period of American rule would commence, when majority control of the highest governing body, the Philippine Commission, would pass from American to Filipino hands. Clearly, the Filipinos were
beginning to assume an increasing degree of autonomy and self-government.

So, to Ernesto’s suggestion that if Elpidio did not like to pursue a career in arts he should study medicine at the University of the Philippines instead, Quirino countered by taking up law for which he thought of he had already acquired some training with his experience in oratory and debate. In San Nicolas, close to his boarding house, the workers at the piers would sometimes gather to hear Dominador Gomez talk to them. In his speeches, Gomez often harped on the evils of misgovernment by a foreign power, emphasizing the need for a government based on the sovereign will of the people. Quirino loved to watch and listen to these labor colloquia.

So, in June 1911 he enrolled in the College of Law, University of the Philippines. In the University, Quirino later recalled telling a group of newspapermen who accompanied him during the campaign trip, that he was “a struggling, often impecunious, student of law”. Of his stay at the U.P., he said that they were “years of darkness, of storm and sunshine, of happiness and bereavement”.

While in college, Quirino did not buy a single book. He depended on his notes; whatever money he had to spare, he spent on clothes and social activities.

In his second year at the law school, he took part in an oratorical contest. His oration was entitled “The Advent of an Island Nation.” While it is not known how the judges rated his performance, the piece, which he wrote himself, was significant in that it dealt with the evolutionary process of the Philippine independence. By 1914 legislature would become essentially a Filipino responsibility, with the Philippine Commission, already controlled by Filipinos, becoming the upper chamber of the colonial legislature. And by 1916, a popularly elected all-Filipino Senate would replace the Commission.
CHAPTER 2

Where the Road Begins

Quirino passed the bar examinations in 1915, the same year the Filipinos assumed majority control of the Philippine Commission. It was an auspicious period for those with legal knowledge and experience. The management of the country’s affairs was beginning to fall into a system, with the Filipinos insisting that developments of the new political social order should derive from their will and necessity, rather than emerge as the result of “foreign dictation.” While neither the American governor general nor the US president himself seemed ready to give a categorical promise of full independence for the country, it was becoming increasingly evident that the task of formulating the new system of laws and regulations that would govern the new social order was gradually being placed in Filipino’s hand. The following year, for instance the Philippine Senate would be created in accordance with the Jones Autonomy Act which provided for an elective bicameral Philippine Legislature.

There is no direct evidence that these developments entered Quirino’s calculations when he decided, instead of practicing law, to accept the rather lowly position of law clerk in the Philippine Commission, or when he refused an offer to serve as chief clerk of the Bureau of Science which carried a bigger salary. Initially appointed assistant law clerk, he was later promoted to special clerk in the Philippine Commission.

In this position, Quirino had the opportunity of working in association with other bright young men aspiring to create an impact with their intelligence and knowledge on the new political and social order that was being created. While the position of law clerk did not carry a high salary, it allowed him to indulge his passion for good shirts and well-tailored suits. His job required him to work with Americans on special detail and to assist the Filipino members of the assembly to often consult the Commission on various types of legislation. It may be said, therefore, that his elegance was not misplaced; in the words of an early admirer, his propensity towards dandyism “was demanded by the exigencies of the work” Vicente Villami, however, naughtily remarked that Quirino’s dandyism compelled him to wear a vest even in the most torrid heat of summer. After his office hours at the Senate, Quirino went to the Philippine Columbian Club where he also worked as secretary.

It was while Quirino was holding this job that Senate president Manuel Quezon first noticed him. Quezon was so impressed by Quirino’s deportment, the efficiency with which he tackled his assignments, and the intelligence with which he conducted his work in general that when Quezon needed a secretary to replace an assistant in the Senate who had been dismissed, he called for Quirino. Later he made Quirino his permanent private secretary.
When World War I broke out, Quezon went to United States, which had declared war against Germany, to offer President Woodrow Wilson one Filipino division for service in Europe. The members of that volunteer brigade mostly consisted of students of the University of the Philippines in Los Baños. Accompanying Quezon on that trip was Quirino.

The 25,000 Filipino volunteers “did not attain their patriotic ambition to unfurl the flag of our country on the bloody battlefields of Europe,” Quirino said of that trip with Quezon, “but with the spirit of loyalty they displayed, no less than their military preparedness, they stood guard over this outpost of democracy and enabled the forces of United States to throw their concentrated power into the crucial battle fields on the other side of the world.” The problems brought about by the war, however, kept the office of the Senate President Quezon busy. Quirino devoted long, unbroken hours to his work and Quezon found him a studious and efficient assistant. Quirino would bring a bundle of urgent papers to his home on Vermont, Ermita, and work on them during the night and take them back to the Senate the following day. At one time, close to midnight as the silence of the neighborhood was disturbed by a screaming American woman who cries, “Thief! Thief!” Quirino went out to ask the distraught woman where the thief had gone. Quirino prowled the neighborhood, and as there were no people in the streets anymore, he was able to corner the thief single-handed as he tried to sneak into the house of Jaime de Veyra.

One commentator has remarked that the work with Quezon must have provided Quirino with a “backseat view of politics” which helped to prepare him for the endless vicissitudes and in-fighting that revolved around the position of Chief Executive. Quirino’s assessment of that phase of his life, however, related more to the qualities of Quezon which as private secretary he was enabled to observed in person and to say: “It is an eloquent commentary on Quezon’s creative leadership that in every crisis which required the people to draw on their very instinct of national self-preservation, he was able to raise the standard to which they rallied and closed rank presenting a solidarity and a common will that swept aside every obstruction and nullified the most vicious criticism at home or abroad.”

Quirino serve under Quezon in the Philippine Senate for two years; in 1918, he returned to Vigan to practice law. The following year was to be an election year, and in Vigan, the elitist and traditional wealthy families—the Singsons, Querols, Crisologos, and Quemas—dominated Ilocos Sur politics. These landlords, caciques, mestizos and Sangleys rallied around the partido Democrata whose platform reflected somewhat the radical nationalism of the Vigan elite. The partido Democrata as a matter of fact dominated Vigan politics at the time; under the leadership of Don Vicente Singson Encarnacion, the party succeeded in electing the latter successively, first as Representative, then as Senator.

The Partido Democrata and the Nacionalista Party, because of the nationalist sentiments and ideas of the majority of their membership had to wait for some time before they could be launched as political parties. The Sedition Laws made punishable the faintest expression of nationalism and independence. Therefore, the first political party to be established in 1990 was the Federal Party (Partido Federal) which consisted of the so-called Autonomists, who had endorsed the Hay Plan proposed by the Schurman Commission in 1899, and former officials and military officers.
of the Malolos republic who had either surrendered voluntarily or had been captured after the revolutionary government had fallen into the hands of the American. Of the Federal Party, which consisted of the old ilustrados, it was also said that its organization had the sanction of Governor Taft himself who adopted a policy of confining major political appointments of his administration to Federalistas. Thus Pardo de Tavera, Legarda, Luzuriaga, Arellano, Federalistas all, was among the first Filipinos to be appointed to high political position. After civil government was established, Taft saw to it that the first provincial governors and the mayor of Manila, among many other officials, would be Federalistas.

By 1905, however, the partido Federal had begun to “evolve” and change its platform, finally emerging as the Partido Nacional Progresista. Pardo de Tavera explained this “evolution” of the party to Taft by the saying that the old Federal party “you used know is dead and were I to try at this time to resurrect it, I would not be able to attract any adherents.”

Independence as a political issue was still alive, but the harsh Sedition Law compelled its advocates to dissimulate their feelings. Prior to 1906, therefore, Filipino nationalists were obliged to content themselves by organizing a civic league the main object of which was to establish “a permanent committee in the United States to look after Philippine interests”.

As the election to the national assembly approached, however, the ban on the organization of radical parties was lifted. Almost immediately, various political groups were formed, among them the Partido Urgentista and the Comite de la Union Nacional which demanded immediate, independence “by peaceful means if they can but violence if they must”, to quote the phrase used by Governor Smith in appraising their platforms. In 1907, the two political organizations merged to form the nacionalista Party. Among its leaders were Sergio Osmena, Manuel L. Quezon, Alberto Barreto, Rafael del Pan, Galicano Apacible, Pablo Ocampo, Felipe Agoncillo, Rafael Palma, and Fernando and Leon Ma. Guerrero.

The growth of the Nacionalista Party was phenomenal; it declared that its aim was “immediate independence of the Philippine island – under a democratic government”, thereby confirming the insight of Legarda who, in explaining the evolution of the old Partido Federal to the Partido Nacional Progresista, had written; “it must be kept in mind that, if this government is to proceed within the bounds of reason, there is not at present any person or entity or any class whatsoever, no matter how popular or great, that can prevent public sentiment from favoring Philippine independence.”

Having served with Quezon and a Nacionalista dominated Senate, Quirino organized a branch of the Nacionalista Party upon his return to Vigan. While the elite, through the Partido Democatra dominated Vigan politics, in national politics it was the Nacionalista Party that ruled. Nevertheless, for anyone without adequate resources to oppose the dominant rule of the caciques of Vigan was considered political suicide.

It is within the context of Vigan – or, for that matter Ilocos politics – that Quirino’s moves must be seen as those of a master tactician.

Seeing that the Vigan elite were consolidated around the
opposition Partido Democrata, Quirino persuaded a member of a wealthy and traditional family of the Syquias, Don Tomas, to run for governor against the candidate of Partido Democrata, Simeon Ramos, thus driving a wedge among the elite, while keeping for himself the slot for representative. Then he went to Manila to secure Quezon’s blessings for his candidacy as well as for the Nacionalista Party of Ilocos Sur as a whole. At the time, the Quezon’s were residing on Lamayan Street in Sta. Ana. Quezon met Quirino in the presence of Doña Aurora:

“But you don’t have campaign money, Quirino.” Quezon told him.

“I know, Mr. President,” Quirino persisted. “But I have just organized the party in Ilocos Sur. Party leaders there chose me unanimously. They’d be disappointed if I don’t run.”

Adept at handling patronage, Quezon said: “I can get you a good job. How would you like to be assistant Director of Posts?” “I’m a lawyer, Mr. President. I won’t enjoy being a postmaster.”

“Well, then, how about being assistant Director of Prisons?”

“My father was a provincial warden, Mr. President. In fact, I was born in jail. But I don’t think I want to follow in my father’s footprint.”

“All right, then, I will give you a chance to practice law. I’ll make you legal counsel of a bank at P8,000 a year. Then you can start saving money for your campaign.”

Mrs. Quezon wanted Quirino to accept the offer. As private secretary of Quezon he received a salary of P3,200 a year. The offer was therefore very attractive. Mrs. Quezon strongly urged Quirino to accept. But Quirino persisted and said “Mr. President, I want to serve the people.”

After a while, Quezon finally said, “Go ahead, Quirino. You have the urge”.

As in the high school debates of his youth, Quirino turned out to be a persuasive speaker during the political campaign. He was hailed as the representative of the poor people, and was popular with the youth, while those who remembered him as the son of a former jail warden accepted him as one of them.

Tomas Syquia lost in the election, while Quirino, a poor candidate, won by an overwhelming majority. “Quirino’s triumph in [that] election,” said associate Justice Roman Ozaeta “marked a political awakening among his people – it convinced them that a commoner may be as well endowed with the qualities of leadership as those born of aristocratic and wealthy families.”

In a large sense, it opened Ilocos politics not only to the young, but to the sons of “the masses.” It thus signaled the transformation of Philippine politics as the elitists and aristocrats were thrown out of powers and the new generation consisting the initial products of the new public school system began to take over the reins of political leadership and authority.

Having lost by a narrow margin, Tomas Syquia decided on Quirino’s advice to contest the election of Ramos, his
opponent. Quirino offered his service as legal counsel free. Unfortunately,

Don Tomas died of cardiac arrest two months later. However, his political association with Don Tomas Syquia enabled Quirino to establish a more amicable relationship with the Syquia clan, particularly with Don Gregorio, a veteran of the revolutionary opposition against Spanish colonial rule who at first kept aloof from Elpidio whom he considered an upstart. Don Gregorio despised the product of the new secular educational system. He favored the old traditional system with its grounding on scholastic philosophy and the European language and therefore, preferred the graduates of the University of Santo Tomas to those of from the public school system where instruction was based on English and on the egalitarian democratic postulates. He sent his granddaughters Alicia and Petronila to the St. Scholastica’s College, rather than to the public schools. In politics he was inclined to support the platforms of the Partido Progresista which, in the national directorate as well as in the politics of Vigan consisted of wealthy landowners.

The election protest of Tomas Syquia as well as the activity of Nacionalista Party in Ilocos made it necessary for Quirino to be frequently with the Syquias in the Ilocos and in Manila. At this time, Alicia was a buxom girl of 16 and was just graduating from high school. As he flirted “outrageously” with the daughters of the traditional families, Quirino hardly paid any attention to the Syquia girls.

Then one evening during the party at the Syquia mansion in Vigan, the lights suddenly went out. The girls screamed in panic. When the lights went on, according to Dr. Jose Singson, nephew of Don Vicente, “I saw Alicia standing close to Elpidio, who had a protective arm around her.”

They were married on January 16, 1921 in a grand wedding ceremony in Vigan.

* * * * *

The 1919 election saw the entry of a number of young Filipinos into politics which used to be dominated by the old ilustrados. The young legislators were mostly the initial products of the new school system, moving one commentator to conclude that Quirino’s “election to the House of Representatives paved the way for English speaking Filipinos, especially graduates of the University of the Philippines, to enter politics and challenge the elder Spanish speaking political leaders.”

Actually, the turn-over of transfer of power to the new breed of Filipinos educated under the American system was purely coincidental. The fact was the ilustrados who had organized and led the propaganda movement against Spain and wrested power from the radicals in the revolutionary government were getting old. Society was undergoing a process of generational succession.

Nor was the election in 1919 decided on the issue of generational or even cultural difference (English vs. Spanish-speaking candidates) as some commentators would seem to imply. What happened was simply that a new generation steeped in the democratic postulates of the new order was taking over the reins of political power without having to wage a revolution. The new generation, as illustrated by the case of Quirino, was taking over political responsibilities amid the ambience and within the ambit of the old order.

Thus, it could be said that Quirino and his generation preserved the continuity of our political history during the 20th century.
Thirty years later, as Quirino prepared to vacate Malacañang to give way to his successor Ramon Magsaysay, a perceptive social historian would refer to his administration as the last link to the old world of our social and political experience.

And, indeed, there was much in the personal style of Quirino that was reminiscent of the old world: his idea of deportment as related to personal as well as civic and social responsibilities (“for clothes oft proclaim the man” from Polonius’ advice to the young Laertes, a passage from Shakespeare which Quirino memorized in high school and would recite in 1950), the concern for probity and delicadeza, the rhetoric continually embellished with passages from the classics, etc.

The deviation from the old order, on the other hand, maybe suggested by the concern of the new batch of legislators for the principles of equity; social, as against individual, good; for labor legislation and anti-trust laws.

As member of the House of Representatives, Quirino took active a part in national affairs. He played the pork barrel system to the hilt. As a ranking member of the ruling party personally close to Quezon, he was able to secure large amounts which went into the construction of ports, roads, and bridges in Ilocos Sur.

But beyond serving his constituencies, Quirino concerned himself with the need to expand access to higher learning on a nation-wide basis. He sponsored, in his own words, the movement for “more liberal extension of higher educational facilities throughout the islands so that the sons of the rich as well as those of the poor should have the same opportunity of obtaining university training”. He sought approval of a bill providing for the establishment of a junior college of the University of the Philippines in Vigan. Later, an identical law provided for the operation of a similar branch in Cebu City. The effort to make the UP co-extensive with the archipelago which the present UP system has partially fulfilled may therefore be traced to the initiative of Quirino.

He was deeply interested to farm problems and proposed legislation for the benefit of rice growers and tabacco producers.

On the issue of unipersonalism vs. collectivism which split the Nacionalista party into the faction of Sergio Osmeña and that of Quezon, Quirino supported Quezon. He questioned on the floor of the House of Representatives the manner in which the independence fund was being disbursed without the knowledge and approval of Legislature.

To mollify him, Osmeña as head of the party, commissioned him as the official delegate of the House of Representatives to the International Bar Association conference held in Peking. Despite this gesture of appeasement, Quirino continued to oppose the unipersonalistic style of the party leadership. In the words of an admiring colleague, Quirino “evaded all outside efforts to muzzle him.”

In the 1922 elections, the battle line was drawn between Quezon’s collectivism and the unipersonalism of Osmeña. Quirino became the standard bearer of the collectivistas in the first Senatorial district. His opponent was Isabelo de los Reyes, a legendary figure who had associated with Rizal, Aglipay, and the Syndicalists in Spain. Quirino naturally lost to Don Belong.

In the next election three years later, Quezon had become reconciled with Osmeña. Quirino accepted the nomination...
to be the candidate opposed to Senator Santiago Fonacier who was considered a strong opponent than “the one he had to contend with when he first ran for representative.” He was not spared the personal attacks in the campaigns. His opponent being a prominent Ilocano, the party machinery of the latter tried to make an issue of Quirino’s humble origins. “The fisherman from Caoayan comes fishing again,” Quirino detractors would say during political meetings. “He is the most expert fisherman, having lived on his catch since childhood.”

To this, Quirino would reply in good humor and say, “Of course, I am master fisherman. Didn’t I catch the biggest aliso in town?” a pun on his marriage to the wealthy Alicia Syquia.

In the Senate to which he was elected with an overwhelming majority, Quirino shared with Jose P. Laurel the distinction of being the first graduates of the University of the Philippines to be elected to the Senate and as the “first English speaking Senators.”

Quirino next began paying attention to public works. He was concerned about the construction of roads and irrigation system to facilitate the transport of goods and the production of food. Upon the election of Camilo Osias to the Senate, Quirino yielded to the distinguished educator from La Union the Chairmanship of the Committee on Public Instruction, at the same time, yielding public works to Melecio Arranz, an engineer elected as Senator from Cagayan. Relief from this concern allowed Quirino to concentrate on questions of public finance, agriculture, commerce and inter-island shipping, and to serve as Chairman of the Joint Committee on Taxation.

Quirino gathered around him persons knowledgeable about tariff and taxation matters in order to avail of their expertise; the result of the work of this consortium of experts, with Quirino as head, was the formulation and approval of the first Tariff Act.

Quirino next organized the Philippine Economic Association, becoming its first president. Later, the association published Philippine Economic Problems which for a long time was widely acknowledged as “the most authoritative and definitive study” in its field.

He initiated a number of proposals which subsequent congressional bodies were to enact into law and institutionalized as well certain programs which later became the models of future development plans. For, instance, it was Quirino who first proposed the establishment of an office...
for a Philippine trade commissioner in Washington, D.C. “for the propose of keeping a man in the United States capital on the watch of reactionary measures in [the US Congress] affecting Philippine commercial and industrial products.” He also endorsed a proposal to have a permanent exhibit of Filipino products in Washington under the supervision of the trade commissioner. “Filipinos have more need of such an office in Washington,” Quirino argued, “than Americans in the Philippines where every American businessman is an American trade commissioner.”

In addition to his multiple duties in the Senate, he was also chosen Chairman of the committee on Rules, Election and Privileges. In this capacity, he initiated the codification of the scattered election laws. He sponsored the land colonization act on which the Commonwealth land settlement act was patterned; then, with the assistance of Colonel Dwight Eisenhower, he drafted the Philippine law on national defense. The law on national defense may be considered central to the general effort of the Legislature to set up the structures and institutions that would serve as the foundation of a secure, sovereign and independent nation. Already, at that time, public apprehension was being aroused by the rising strength and power of Japan. No authoritative voice, however, had yet been raised categorically pinpointing Japan as imminent threat to the security of the pacific region. Nevertheless, the Filipinos were pressing the United States for a pledge of independence on a certain date even as the geo-political realities in the pacific region were casting a long, darkening shadow over the prospects of Philippine national defense and security against invasion. Indeed, national security would serve as the vital consideration in setting the date for Philippine independence. It would also become the main issue in the protracted dispute over the Tydings-McDuffie Act and the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act.

In the 1931 elections, Quirino filed his candidacy on the strength of his six-year record and won again by an overwhelming majority. Thereafter, he would become the unchallenged representative and spokesman of the first Senatorial district.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat, was elected president. The Democratic Party had traditionally been sympathetic to the aspirations for independence of nations under colonial rule. It had, in the early years of 20th century, opposed US colonial adventurism; consequently, the Philippine legislature thought it fitting to send another independence mission to the United States. This time the delegation was jointly led by the Senate president Protempore Sergio Osmeña and House speaker Manuel Roxas. The mission became known as the Os-Rox mission.

The Os-Rox mission brought back from Washington the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act which set a definite date of independence after a ten-year period transition. Quezon, however, objected to the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act. Subsequent commentators have dismissed Quezon’s objections as mere quibbling, pointing to the Tydings-McDuffie Act as virtually the same in substantive content - “the same dog with a different stripe”, quipped Camilo Osías, Philippine resident commissioner in Washington, D.C. These commentators said that Quezon’s objection to the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act was sheer “political gimmickry”.

Quezon’s objection to the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act again caused a split in the ruling party, resulting in the division of the Legislature into the Pros led by Quezon and the Antis
led by Osmeña-Roxas. Quirino remained loyal to Quezon by joining the Pros.

The issue was submitted to the people and then to the Legislature which rejected the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act. Quirino, majority floor leader in the Senate, was designated by Quezon adviser to the independence mission to the US which would work for approval of a law to replace the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act. The delegation consisted among others, of Vicente Singson Encarnacion, acting secretary of finance and concurrently Secretary of Agriculture and commerce; Resident Commissioner Isauro Gabaldon and Solicitor General Jose P. Melencio. Quirino brought his brother Antonio as his assistant.

The independence mission led by Quezon succeeded in securing approval of the Tydings-McDuffie Law. The substantive difference between this law and the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act was the very basis of Quezon’s objection to it. “My main objection,” wrote Quezon in the Good Fight “was to the provision that called for the retention of the military and naval establishments of the United States after the Philippine Republic shall have been proclaimed. I did not object to the provision regarding the retention of naval station so long as this was made dependent upon the consent of the Philippine Republic; but I did strenuously and definitely oppose the retention of military establishments which would destroy the very essence of an independent existence for the Philippines.”

The US military bases will continue to be a highly sensitive issue in the Philippine-American relations involving as they do considerations of national pride and mutual respect complexed with dollars, and would probably bedevil Philippine Presidents and politicians until the end of the century. It is reassuring in retrospect to realize that it was on the shoulders of President Elpidio Quirino immediately after World War II and its emotional aftermath that the responsibility for keeping a clear eye and a cool hand on this dangerous legacy would rest.
CHAPTER 3
Commonwealth to Republic

The Tydings-McDuffie Law laid the foundation for the establishment of a transition government before the grant of independence. It stipulated specific steps to be taken and conditions to be fulfilled prior to the establishment of the Commonwealth of the Philippines. First among these was the holding of a constitutional convention not later than October 1934 to draft a constitution which would be submitted to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt for approval. A plebiscite held for the ratification of the constitution would follow prior to a general election to choose the officers of the commonwealth government. After a ten-year transition period, the United States would then recognize the sovereign and independent Republic of the Philippines.

In 1934, Quirino, then a Senator, was elected delegate of Ilocos Sur to the constitutional convention. During the same year, Frank Murphy, the last American Governor-General, appointed with the approval of Filipino leaders Quezon and Osmeña upon recommendation of the ruling Nacionalista Party, legislators to head different departments of the government: Senator Teofilo Sison and representatives Eulogio Rodriguez (Rizal) and Ramon Torres (Negros Occidental). Quirino was appointed secretary of finance without relinquishing his seat in the Senate.

The convention spent several weeks in heated debate on the rules of procedure and on the question of whether the constitution being drafted was intended only for the Commonwealth or for the future Republic of the Philippines as well. Quirino played a significant role in breaking an impasse on the issue. In a contest of parliamentary wit and rhetoric, Quirino easily fended off different interpellations by delegates Manuel Roxas and Camilo Osias in an effort to reach agreement on a compromise motion to the effect that it was not imperative to adopt a resolution on an issue that had already been debated at great length in several meetings and caucuses.

Quirino served in three major committees created by the convention: the committees on sponsorship currency and banks, and the tariff. He was instrumental in promoting consensual agreement on important proposals and amendments: approval of a proposal for members of the national Assembly from the Mountain Province to be elected by qualified voters therein; rejection of an amendment allowing the assemblymen from the Mountain Province to be chosen “as may be determined by law”; rejection of a proposal to adopt the freehold system for the Philippine mining lands. Together with delegates Jose Aruego (Pangasinan), Manuel Lim (Manila), Vicente Francisco (Cavite), and Gregorio Banaga (Tarlac), Quirino opposed the creation of a permanent
commission whose primary function was to screen the appointments made by the chief executive as well as to serve as a prosecuting body in impeachments cases. Quirino also actively participated in the debates on provisions of the constitution relating to the disqualification of members of the national assembly holding other offices during their term, the president’s vote power, and the respective roles of the president and the national assembly in the preparation and approval of the budget. In a discussion of the article relating to the organization of the judicial system, Quirino was able to introduce an amendment even though the convention had already given its approval.

Quirino: it seems we have approved section 4 in the following form: “The supreme court shall be composed of a Chief Justice and ten Associate Justices and may sit either in banc or in two divisions, unless otherwise provided by law”. Does the last phrase “unless otherwise provided by law” refer to the expression, in banc, and also to the composition of the Supreme Court?

Francisco: It refers exclusively to the composition of the Supreme Court, to the Chief Justice and members of the court.

Quirino: So that when the national assembly believes it convenient, it can reduce or increase the number of the members of the Supreme Court.

Francisco: Yes.

Quirino served the Murphy administration for two years. As head of the finance department, he was responsible for the disbursement of government funds including those allocated to public works projects. He was, therefore, at the very center of power and patronage. His tenure of office would normally have ended upon the inauguration of the Commonwealth government. But President Manuel Quezon retained him in the cabinet and appointed him to the same portfolio. He thus became the first Secretary of Finance of the Commonwealth government.

As Secretary of Finance, Quirino also served as the chairman of the board of trustees of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes and of the Special Underdepartment Trade Committee. He worked for the creation of the Loan and Investment Board and the National Economic Council - agencies which Quezon would eventually establish. The Department of Finance controlled all the revenue-raising agencies of the government bureaucracy: the Bureau of Customs, Bureau of Internal Revenue, Bureau of Treasury, Bureau of Banking, Bureau of Printing, Tobacco Inspection Board, and Manila Harbor Board. The Secretary of Finance, charged with the management of the financial resources of the government, inevitably became a powerful and influential arm of the Commonwealth government.

On 8 February 1936, Quezon appointed Quirino to succeed Teofilo Sison, who had been appointed associate justice of the Court of Appeals, as Secretary of interior - a position considered as the premier office of the newly established Filipino bureaucracy. Under the Department of Interior were the various local government units: the provinces, municipalities, chartered cities and other political subdivisions, as well as the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes which supervised
the provinces in Mindanao and Sulu, Mountain Province, and Nueva Vizcaya - and the Board of Censors for Moving Pictures.

As Secretary of the Interior, Quirino initiated the transformation of barrios into municipalities and the creation of more chartered cities. During his term, he organized and personally inaugurated four new cities: Cebu and Iloilo in the Visayas, Zamboanga and Davao in Mindanao. Through his initiative Bacolod in Negros Occidental gained the status of chartered city.

Quirino had been particularly interested in the development of Mindanao and Sulu. He created the National Land Settlement Administration, a government agency responsible for a variety of activities and programs in Mindanao, and established the Department of Mindanao and Sulu (under the authority of commissioner) to supervise activities involving the welfare of the Muslim Filipinos. His development programs for Mindanao opened vast idle lands to adventurous pioneers and legitimized their exploitation.

As Secretary of Interior Quirino became one of the most powerful and visible government officials. His function involved frequent visits to the provinces and rural communities in Luzon and in the southern islands, inspection of barrios, municipalities and cities and dialogues with the constituents of the different political units of the government. Quirino instantly became a popular government official, a development which other politicians construed as part of political strategy to promote his presidential ambition. Knowledgeable observers, however, believed that Quirino would not be allowed to go farther than this, because the powers-that-be had other plans.

In the election of 1938, Quirino decided to resign and launch his candidacy for the national assembly. He lost to Benito Soliven. Smarting from the defeat, he soon put it behind him as a “closed chapter” of his political career. He decided to set up his own law office in Manila. But Quezon gave him several appointments, among them the vice-chairmanship of the board of directors of the Agricultural and Industrial Bank and membership in the board of directors of the National Development Company and several of its subsidiaries.

Between his defeat in the 1938 elections and the end of the Japanese occupation of the Philippines in 1945, Quirino continued to practice law – a career which sent him travelling to the provinces and enabled him to accept professorial assignments in various colleges in Manila. Long before the war began in 1941, he was college dean of Adamson University – a position which he gave up only when he was inducted as Vice President of the Philippines. His career as a lawyer had actually already been enhanced by an earlier admission to practice in the United States district Court in 1921 and in the Supreme Court in 1934. But the Japanese occupation interrupted his law practice.

Filipino leaders of the Commonwealth government tended to view world events of the 1930’s through American spectacles and responded to them as American allies. Critical evaluations of the national implication of important international developments were simply not their concern. They made their own the indifference of a neutralized America to events in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and Franco Spain. However, developments in China and Japan, being much closer home, were creating apprehension among the Commonwealth leaders especially because the Philippines would become independent in a few years’ time.
As war clouds loomed, security measures were designed and implemented. A spy case involving a Filipino military official was discovered. The activities of Axis and Falange agents were monitored and pro-Japanese elements, particularly the Ganaps, were placed under close surveillance. The Ganaps were openly pro-Japanese and anti-American. In concept and direction, the Ganaps were a fascist group operated as a Japanese counter-propaganda unit to carry out “softening up schemes” in anticipation of the Japanese invasion.

The Japanese themselves, however, carried out their “softening up” projects efficiently and consistently through economic penetration and intelligence activities. Japanese economic penetration, for instance, was initiated by private enterprises which Japanese entrepreneurs would later use as instruments of official propaganda and clandestine intelligence-gathering operations.

In 1903, when the American chose Baguio as a summer capital, they imported one thousand five hundred Japanese coolies to work on the construction of the zigzag Road to that city. Upon completion of the project, one hundred fifty of these coolies opted to remain in the country and migrate to Davao where they would work on American hemp and coconut plantations. By 1907 their leader and foreman, Kyosaburo Ohta, had formed the Ohta Development Company.

Otha’s company was actually an agricultural corporation primarily engaged in leasing public lands devoted principally to hemp. Other Japanese corporation were soon established and more Japanese investments were poured into Davao. Japanese corporation bought American landholdings. By 1919, there were around sixty Japanese corporations employing about 10,000 laborers. In 1923, Japanese banks and government agencies helped the Japanese corporation in Davao to survive the crash in hemp prices. And by 1935, the Japanese accounted for 80 per cent of the abaca production of Davao which constituted 48 per cent of the country’s total production.

One evening in December 1941, President Quezon received a message from General Douglas MacArthur, the USSAFE commander-in-chief, advising his family to leave with him for Corregidor. There General MacArthur would be command of the USAFFE as it made its last stand in Bataan against the invaders. Together with Vice-President Sergio Osmeña, Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos, and General Basilio Valdes, Quezon left for Corregidor, after instructing the other members of his official family who would stay behind to “cooperate with the Japanese if necessary but not to take an oath of allegiance to the emperor” Quezon appointed Jorge Vargas, his Executive Secretary, Mayor of Greater Manila.

On 2 January 1942, the Japanese forces entered Manila. General Homma, who was on command of the occupation forces, advised Quezon’s men left behind in Manila to organize themselves as soon as possible and cooperate in setting up the working arrangements between them and the Japanese military authorities. For several days, the pre-war Commonwealth leaders including Jose Yulo, Quintin Paredes, Benigno Aquino, Jose Laurel, Teofilo Sison, Claro Recto, Rafael Alunan, Sotero Baluyot, Jorge Bocobo, Jose Fabella, Serafin Marabut, Leon Guinto, Antonio de las Alas, Elpidio Quirino, Eologio Rodriguez, Sr., Jose Ozamis, Melecio Arran, Ramon Fernandez, Prospero Sanidad, Dominador Tan, Ricardo Navarro, and Jorge Vargas met, debated and agonized over the draft of their official response to the directive of the Japanese military authorities. A transcript of a portion of their discussion reveals the desperation and
uncertainty which haunted the Commonwealth leaders as they met to consider how best to cope with the brutal reality of the Japanese occupation:

Bocobo: I oppose the elimination of “freedom”. If we ourselves eliminate it, I will separate from you. The present war is one for liberty, as President Roosevelt has so clearly stated. Why should we, on our own initiative, eliminate this word if the Japanese themselves are agreeable to it? As a matter of fact, between “freedom” and “independence” I prefer the former. We could be independent without enjoy the individual rights like freedom of speech, religion, press and others.

Prospero Sanidad: I myself will separate from you.
Jose Laurel: President Roosevelt was referring to individual freedom, not national freedom.
Claro Recto: There is no harm in putting them all in: “the realization of our great ideals, the freedom and happiness of our country”.
Quintin Paredes: Ideals include freedom and happiness.
Elpidio Quirino: Just “freedom of our country”.
Ramon Avanceña: We have to clear up the phrase “having in mind the realization of our great ideals”. I want to know if this means we are placing in the hands of the Japanese the realization of our ideals.
Benigno Aquino: El Senador Recto y yo hemos explicado que con las palabras “independence and liberty” queremos decir que Sean cuales fueran las situaciones que nos separa Del Destino hacemos expresion de nuestros ideales, o sea, del ideal de independencia.

Ramon Avanceña: If they cannot realize our ideals for us, why do we put it there?
Elpidio Quirino: They have been saying unequivocally that they have come to liberate us, and we are not asking anything from them.
Rafael Alunan: Are we going to form a new government now?
Elpidio Quirino: If they want, as they did in Manchuria.

A draft was finally formulated and addressed to the Commander-in-Chief of the imperial Japanese Forces:

“In response to the message of the Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Japanese Forces, through Mayor Jorge B. Vargas, we respectfully state that we are profoundly grateful for his expression of solicitude over the welfare of our people.

“We beg to inform the Commander-in-Chief that, as requested and having in mind the independence and freedom of our country, we are ready to assist the military administration to the best of our ability and within the means at our command in the maintenance of peace and order in the promotion of the well-being of our people under said military administration.

“In compliance with the advice of the Commander-in-Chief, we have constituted ourselves into a provisional Commonwealth Council of State in order to accomplish the purposes above mentioned”

Japanese flags adorned the Metropolitan Theater at Plaza Lawton on the 18th of June 1943. Delegates chosen by Kalibapi
tragic death of his wife and three children, Armando, Norma and Fe; mother-in-law, Concepcion Syquia; brothers-in-law, Hector Syquia and Vicente Mendoza; sister-in-law, Margarita Syquia; and nephew, Gregorio Mendoza.

It was February 1945. The famous eight army of the United States led by Lieutenant General Robert L. Eichelberger, had arrived the Liberate south Manila from the Japanese. As they shelled the Japanese military installations in the area, the Japanese soldiers in sheer desperation, knowing they could not escape alive, indulged in a cold blooded massacre of the residents. It was in the course of this murderous rampage, with Lieutenant General Shizou Yokohama in the Japanese imperial forces in command, that tragedy overtook the Quirino family.

Quirino has gathered his wife and children about him on the fateful day of 9th February 1945 in the family residence on Colorado Street, Ermita, to plan their escape from the area. It was four o’clock in the afternoon. The Japanese had transformed the neighborhood into a holocaust of fire and death. A barrage of shells hit the roof of the Quirino residence. As the house burned, Elpidio decided to escape with his family to the home of his mother-in-law, Mrs. Concepcion Jimenez Syquia, on the same street. In a desperate attempt to get out of the hell-hole, Elpidio ordered his son, Tomas, to lead the group. Doña Alicia cuddled his two daughters, infant Fe and Norma. Another son Armando carried the family valuables, including jewelry. All the members of the family then dashed towards the Syquia residence. Tomas and Victoria led the group. Half-way across the street, four Japanese marines, camouflaged with leaves, machine-gunned them. Looking back, Tomas saw the bodies of his mother and two sisters
lying lifeless on the ground. Mrs. Quirino died hugging Fe, while Norma laid lead beside her. Armando tried to retrieve their dead bodies but was stopped by machine-gun fire.

Elpidio’s failure to join his family that night caused him much anguish. The following day he was told of Armando’s death. A bullet had hit the boy’s temple. Tomas wounded in the thigh, suffered from shock. Quirino himself narrowly escaped from a Japanese bayonet thrust and machine-gun fire. Only he, son Tomas and daughter Victoria survived the massacre.

More than any country of south East Asia, the Philippine was perhaps the most ravaged during the war, first by the Japanese occupation and its attendant atrocities, and later, by American bombing and cannonade against Japanese strongholds during the liberation. When the allied forces hit the beaches of Luzon, production was virtually at a standstill; food was extremely scarce.

To address the situation, the Americans created the Philippine Civil Affairs Unit (PCAU) which provided relief for people in the Manila area and in provinces liberated from Japanese control. First organized from New Guinea, the PCAU participated in the Leyte campaigns. The agency had been set up to assist the military commanders in the civil administration and relief of liberated areas. It paid the salaries of municipal officials and teachers in the area already under American control. The US government advanced money needed to purchase goods for relief purposes, subjects, however, to subsequent financial arrangements with the Commonwealth government as soon as military conditions permitted.

PCAU organized free distributions center for rice, cracked corn, sardines and other American canned goods. The amount of the ration was based on the number of persons in their household, some families padded the number of persons in their households in order to get more.

PCAU hired laborers at P1.00 daily with food, and P1.20 without food. When enough money had circulated as a result of the employment created by the American army, PCAU provided consumer good to wholesalers at fixed price. It was PCAU, then, the initially provided the stimulus for economic activity in the war-torn country.

To cope with the evils of hording and manipulating of prices, President Sergio Osmeña issued an executive order setting maximum prices of goods in liberated areas. The EO, however, proved to be sound only on paper. The price of goods in the market-place tended to rise and stay up despite the controls. Confusion reigned, aggravated by the propensity of General MacArthur to initiate policies and make decisions independent of President Osmeña.

On March 7, 1945, Osmeña signed an Executive Order dated February 27 providing for the restoration of the executive departments of the Commonwealth government as they existed before the war, a new feature of the reorganization was the creation of the department of information as part of the Department of Public Instruction. On March 8, Osmeña swore in the new members of the cabinet; Quirino retained his position as Secretary of the Department of Finance. Following the oath-taking, Osmeña delivered a speech laying down the principles and policies of his administration:

1 A After World War II, Quirino extended general amnesty to all Japanese political prisoners, as a sign of national forgiveness, including those who had already been convicted, a measure of his statesmanship.
“We hereby affirm our faith in, and adherence to, the principle of freedom and democracy;

“We shall re-establish in our country a social and political system in which government officials and employees are not the masters of the people but their servants.

“We stand for the individual liberties, guaranteed by our constitution, for the right of every man and woman to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;

“We reject the theory of existence of chosen or superior races;

“We reaffirm our faith in the principle of Philippine-American collaboration.”

MacArthur’s penchant for direct and forceful action inevitably led him to meddle in civil affairs and collide with Osmeña’s slow and deliberate style of governance and administration. The difficult relationship between them came to a head on the issue of convening the Legislature.

Osmeña was reluctant to convene congress for fear that the collaborators would inevitably control it. Actually, Osmeña did not intend to persecute persons suspected of collaboration. On the issue of collaboration he shared the viewpoint of the president Roosevelt who, on June 29, 1944, had declared that those who collaborated with the enemy should be removed “from authority and influence over the political and economic life of the country.”

MacArthur, however, thought that Osmeña was to slow and hesitant; he wanted Congress convened in line with the policy of the United States government to restore constitutional government in the Philippines as soon as peace and order was restored. MacArthur did not want it said that the continued suspension of Congress resulted from his inability as military commander to “restore peace and order in the country.” Nor did he share Osmeña’s fear that the collaborators might take control of the legislative body. The war was over, and the issue of collaboration would tend to lose importance in favor of the future direction of national affairs and the possibilities of national leadership. For instance, it was obvious, that while Manuel Roxas was himself tainted with the sin of collaboration, having served the Laurel Government during the Japanese occupation, MacArthur put him on a pedestal, describing him as “the man of the hour”, the “strong man who could serve the Philippines in a critical period.”

The truth is that if the guidelines laid down by President Roosevelt for the treatment of the collaborators were strictly followed, a dangerous upheaval would have been provoked at the very center of the Philippine society. For here, as in Europe where the elite had collaborated with the Nazis to protect their interests, the Filipino elite also found it necessary it safeguard their lives and their fortunes by collaborating with the Japanese. Pursuing the issue of collaboration on rigid legal grounds would have delayed the reinstatement in a dominant position of the social class through which American colonial rule before the war had operated and through which, in the post-war period, American neo-colonial interest and influence would be maintained. MacArthur’s concern for the ruling class and the restoration of the status quo ante in the Philippines characterized as well his subsequent handling of the Emperor and the Zaibatsu families in Japan. What they did during the war had become less important than what they could do after the war ended.

The highest American officials themselves thus appeared to be divided on the question of how to deal with the issue
of collaboration and more concretely, what to do with the collaborators. President Roosevelt in Washington was a stickler for principle, but his man on the spot MacArthur was a pragmatist and he prevailed. After the death of Roosevelt, the tough-minded commoner Harry Truman who succeeded him could not abide the arrogant MacArthur and he had to go.

When finally Osmeña capitulated to MacArthur by calling a special session of Congress on June 9, he tried to assuage his own misgivings in the collaboration issue by certifying two bills providing for the creation of a court to try collaborators. Roxas attacked the bill, declaring that all those who were employed during the Japanese occupation were actually loyal to the Commonwealth government. His eye was already fixed on the presidency of the Republic and this was his way of winning to his side powerful members of the Nacionalista party who had worked for the enemy. Wanting to preserve party unity and to build a consensus not only on the collaboration issue but on the problems of reconstruction and rehabilitation, Osmeña offered Roxas the position of Philippine Resident Commissioner in Washington.

Roxas rejected the offer; two days later on May 26 he instructed his supporters to launch his candidacy. To preserve party unity, Osmeña announced that he would step aside if Roxas wanted the Presidency. MacArthur meanwhile continued to pressure Osmeña to convene a session of the Philippine Congress. Congress held its regular session in July.

The first thing the Congress did was to reward the members with three years’ back pay corresponding to the three years of enemy occupation. Members of the civil service, acting on the precedent set by the legislators, held a public meeting asking Osmeña to give them back pay also. Osmeña promised nothing, saying the government did not have the money. Roxas, however, declared that if elected, he would have a Back Pay Law approved.

Thus the Nacionalista party was split into two factions, that of the conservatives and that the progressives. The conservatives who supported Osmeña became known as the Osmeña faction. The Roxas faction, consisting of young progressives of the NP became the liberal wing of the Nacionalista Party.

It was, therefore, inevitable that Roxas would be chosen as the standard bearer of the Liberal Party at its founding congress. Roxas, in turn, selected Quirino as his running mate.

The special session of Congress decided to hold the election on April 24. The Liberals assured the people that Roxas and Quirino “were a pair of hard-driving executives,” an obvious, if rather unkind reference to the Malacañang incumbent whose mode of governance and pace of administration had encouraged inefficiency and corruption among government officials, even if Osmeña himself was untainted. The delivery of service was so slow that government relief suffered adversely. The Liberals deplored the inefficient mechanism for the distribution of relief goods and denounced the corruption and irregularities committed by those in charge.

A sense of destiny intruded in the campaign when, at a meeting in Vigan, Roxas told the crowd that he chose Quirino “to be my partner because in case something should happen to me, I want to be sure that this country would be in safe hands.”

Roxas and Quirino had both served the government since the Philippine Commission, although they indeed were, “junior”
to Osmeña who, with Quezon, had become recognized as a national leader long before the grant of independence. In 1946, a new generation was confronting the old, and Roxas and Quirino, both in the prime of life, symbolized the new. This “confrontation between generations” has since become a permanent feature of the endless cycle of Philippine politics. It first emerged when the radical pro-independence members of a new generation began to challenge the conservative ilustrados in the Philippine Commission and in the first National Assembly. The defeat of the old, and the ensuing changes brought about by the ascendancy of the “young” have since then become the only feature of change in national politics. Given the basically elitist nature of Philippine democracy, no genuine overhaul of the system in accordance with a program of a radical reform should be expected.

Malacañang, or more properly to government in 1946 under Osmeña, had seemed to have no other purpose than to perpetuate the old order. It had become fettered by bonds, said Quirino, “which have sodden the feet of the present administration”

Declaring that what the country needed was a “new reinvigorated leadership,” Quirino described the situation which made the demand for change the crucial factor in the political struggle. “In our trips to the provinces,” he said, “I noted a demand – an irresistible demand – for change. Everyone expects immediate relief.”

He adverted to the inability of Osmeña to unify the country, noting that “to make a country laid waste and desolate rise on its feet demands not only intelligent, vigorous and concerted action, but real national unity.” Quirino here may have been referring subtly to the insistent desire of Osmeña to pursue the issue of collaboration instead of promoting a national consensus. It was also a subtle hint that the issue should now be put to rest, the standard bearer of his party being perceived by some as a collaborator.

But beyond the requirements of the election campaign or the need to defend the standard bearer of his party, Quirino was enunciating a serious philosophy of politics. While harping on the need for unity, for instance, he was not advocating unity for its own sake or unity bereft of principles. Referring to the liberal party as none other but “the recognized Nacionalista Party,” he insisted the unity “must be achieved by the realignment of national forces, a realignment founded on principles and not on a false pretense or sentiment”. Osmeña was a traditional politician in the sense that he was addicted to the idea of coalition as a valid political goal at any time and under any condition. He tried, for instance, to palliate Quirino’s disgust with unipersonalistic leadership by allowing the latter to represent the Philippines in the Peer conference in Peking. The Osmeña government in 1946 may indeed be described as an example of an excessive “coalitionism”, or, as his running mate, Amang Rodriguez put it, by the “politics” of “addition and not subtraction”.

Quirino attacked precisely such coalitionist goal, saying that a party’s platform must be a program to “loosen all ties which have grown barnacles on our ship of state.”

Everywhere they went, Roxas and Quirino were hailed enthusiastically. Osmeña refused to campaign, saying simply that if the people want him, they would vote for him. The third party was the modernist group, with Hilario Moncado and Luis Salvador as standard bearers.

A total of P2, 218,847 voters went to the polls and gave the
PHOTO

FOLIO

The Judgment of History
The Cryptia Debating Club of Manila High School

Elpidio Quirino during his student days.

Elpidio Quirino, the young congressman from Ilocos Sur on his way to Peking as a delegate.
Elpidio Quirino and Alicia Syquia on their wedding day, Jan. 16, 1921

On a visit to Ilocos Norte with (front row: Left to right) Alicia Quirino and Gen. Paulino Santos, Mauro Mendez and provincial governor S. Espiritu.

UP Class 1915 - Elpidio Quirino, Sabino Padilla, Jose P. Laurel, photo was taken on Jan. 3, 1924
The Quirino family before WWII - Armando, Alicia Quirino, Vicky, Norma, Elpidio Quirino, and Tomas
Reception and dance given by the Filipino community in honor of the Philippine Independence Delegation to Washington D.C.

Left Bottom: The group working for the Tydings-McDuffie Law on board the S.S. Pres. Hoover on their way to the United States. Seated in the first row are the Singson Encarnacion daughters, Neny and Amor Melencio. 2nd row — Dr. Gavio, Carmen Aguinaldo Melencio, Elpidio Quirino, Mrs. Lucia Singson Encarnacion, Pres. Quezon with Vicky, Alicia Quirino, Don Vicente Singson Encarnacion, Don Isauro Gabaldon, Jose Melencio. 3rd row — standing — Jose de Jesus, Tito Gonzalez, Concepcion, Col. Manuel Nieto and Antonio Quirino Reyes.


President Manuel Roxas delivering a speech on Independence Day, July 4, 1946. In the background are Elpidio Quirino, Mrs. Trinidad Roxas, US Ambassador Paul V. McNutt, and Mrs. McNutt.

Tomas and Vicky Quirino escort their father to the Grandstand for the Vice-President’s oathtaking — May 1946.

Elpidio Quirino with Senator Benigno Aquino, Sr., Placido Nepomuceno, Vicente Formoso and other political leaders of the time.

President Manuel Roxas and Vice President Elpidio Quirino troops the line during a parade.
President Roxas with Elpidio Quirino and Supreme Court Justices in Malacanang which include Justice Sabino Padilla, Cesar Bengzon, Ricardo Paras, Chief Justice Manuel Moran and Roman Ozaeta.
Elpidio Quirino arrives in Malacañang from Cebu with Emilio Cruz, Senate Pres. Jose Avelino, Asst. Executive Sec. Jose P. de Leon, Speaker Eugenio Perez and Chief of Protocol Manuel Zamora.
In his inaugural address on 4 July 1946, Manuel Roxas, as first President of the Republic, had proudly and gratefully recalled the beginnings of Philippine-American relations in 1898 and urged the Filipino people to render absolute faith in the benevolence of America. “To do otherwise,” he declared “would be to forswear all faith in democracy, in our future, and in ourselves.” With a rhetorical flourish that must have impressed General MacArthur, High Commissioner McNutt and the other American officials present, he solemnly intoned: “Our safest course, and I believe it true for the rest of the world as well, is in the glistening wake of America whose sure advance with mighty prow breaks for smaller craft the waves of fear.”

This was five years after the Japanese invasion and the Battle of Bataan, and there was time for the euphoria of freedom to obliterate the agony of defeat. But rhetoric could not conceal the grievous threat of economic disaster that lay

Roxas-Quirino tandem a resounding victory. In the official canvass of votes of vice president, Quirino obtained a total of 1,161,725 votes as against Rodriguez 1,051,243, or a majority of 110,482 votes.

CHAPTER 4

Diplomat and Nationalist
Immediately following his election, Roxas visited Washington to negotiate for American financial assistance. In his speeches and statements he again emphasized Philippines’ absolute commitment to the United States and the American way of life. He assured the Americans that they had found in the Filipino nation, a “protagonist of the American political and economic system – a broadcasting station for Americanism”, and that the Philippines was “absolutely determined to do everything to make America’s Far East policy to be effective.” And in his meetings with officers of the Navy Department, he pledged full cooperation in their search for bases in the Philippines. “You can have what you want.” Roxas told them. “You can have as many as you like. Just keep away from the populated centers.”

Vice-President Quirino knew that negotiations on American bases in the Philippines would start soon after the grant of Philippine Independence on July 4, 1946. In a conference with Don Vicente Singson Encarnacion, who was in Washington with him in 1934 during the campaign for the Tydings-McDuffie Independence Act, he said:

... many bases would encroach on our status as a sovereign nation. Let them have Clark Field and Subic Bay, and perhaps Camp John Hay as a recreation place, but certainly not Fort McKinley, Sangley Point, Nichols Fields and Iba in Zambales. Even if they are allowed to have these bases, will they be able to ward of any future foreign attacks? For example, if the US gets into a war with Soviet Russia – remember how the Japanese demolished the American bases in Pampanga, Cavite, Makati and Zambales after Pearl Harbor? And this time, if war comes, the terrible weapon of the nuclear bombs will be used. Our people living adjacent to those bases will be affected by the fall-out ...

The relationship between the two countries was clearly unequal, and the so-called “free trade” between them was far from free. At the same time, President Roxas realized that the American Aid was a sine qua non for national rehabilitation. He had nowhere else to go. The Philippine government had to cope as best it could with the various pressures accompanying such option: MacArthur’s sponsorship, High Commissioners McNutt’s insistence on the conversion of specific strategic areas into American military or naval bases, the interests of American entrepreneurs and their local partners among the hacenderos, financiers and industrial magnates.

The glistening wake of America would bring forth the Bell Trade Act, for instance, which was passed by the US Congress in October, 1945. Its basic purpose is to maintain free trade relations of both countries which would otherwise end with the grant of Philippine Independence. The Act stipulated eight more years of duty-free trade until 1954 and provided for gradual tariff during a twenty year period until 1974. But while free trade would allow the unrestricted free-entry of American goods into the country, Philippine sugar, cordage, tobacco and coconut toil entering the American market would be placed under quotas. The Act also provided the other Philippine exports would be subject to absolute quotas should the US Government determine that this presented substantial competition to equivalent American products. Moreover, the Act pegged the rate of exchange at two pesos to one dollar and stipulated that the rate could only be changed with the approval of the US government. This provision, as US Congressman Wilbur Mills frankly admitted, was intended to insure “that when capital decides to revert to the United States it may do so without depreciation”.

The Judgement of History
High Commissioner McNutt demanded 7 sites in all. He insisted that the bases be located near Manila and that US military authorities would have exclusive jurisdiction over American personnel even outside the bases.

In His “Memoirs”, Quirino recalls that he and Roxas had privately agreed during the negotiations with McNutt that while Roxas would appear accommodating Quirino would remain firm. Thus, following the advice of Singson Engcarnacion, Quirino conveyed his, “NO!” to most of the demands of McNutt, his fist smashing the top of the negotiating table. He succeeded in trimming down the American Base requirements from 70 to 23 sites, including 16 permanent and seven temporary bases. The largest of the bases were Clark Field Airbase in Angeles, Pampanga and the US 7th Fleet base in Subic Bay, Zambales.

Quirino’s role in the bases negotiations with the United States become highly significant when viewed in the context of various international developments at that time. Tension gripped the whole of Southeast Asia. In China, in 1949, Mao Tse-Tung’s Red Army triumph against the nationalist forces to flee to Taiwan. In 1950, war ravaged the Korean Peninsula. Japan, then under American occupation, emerged as a fast rising economic power. Indonesia was intensifying its efforts to eradicate communist threat. The war on Indo-China was headed for Dien-Bien-Phu and the resulting split of Vietnam in 1954.

Situated at the very center of the western Pacific and Southeast Asia, The Philippines had great need for strong leadership to formulate and implement an urgent program of social rehabilitation, economic development and political stability, and to provide diplomatic expertise that would link the Republic to the United Nations effort to safeguard international peace and security in a nuclear world.

Early in 1947, Quirino traveled for eighty days in the United States and Europe as President Roxas’ Ambassador of Goodwill. This assignment enabled him to meet and confer with many world leaders in various issues and problem of great importance --- an experience which would equip him with a broad perspective on international relations.

Quirino carried with him President Roxas’ letter which officially introduce him to US President Harry Truman and affirm his authority to negotiate treaties with other countries. His first stop was Honolulu where the officials of Hawaiian Government, the commander of the US Army and Navy, and leading businessmen honored him with a state dinner. He addressed a special joint session of the Territorial Legislature.

From the Hawaiian islands, Quirino proceeded to the West Coast.; In San Francisco, the Consul General of the Dominican Republic and the President of the Consular Association paid tribute to Quirino’s statesmanship and his role as “initiator of notable international agreements and treaties, which shall make possible the economic, industrial and agricultural development of the Philippine Republic”. In Washington, D.C., his next stop, Quirino made a round of calls and lunched with President Truman at the White House. He was a guest of honor at a formal reception given by Ambassador Joaquin Elizalde at the newly acquired embassy building which served as Quirino’s official residence while in Washington.

Proceeding to New York, Quirino was warmly welcomed by The New York Times and The New York World Telegram
with “Mabuhay!” headlines and editorials which extolled his firm belief in and support of the “kind of democracy Americans know and believe in”. The day following his arrival, Ambassador Carlos P. Romulo, permanent representative of the Philippines to the United Nations, took him on a quick tour to the city. Filipino residents had an opportunity to meet Quirino at an afternoon meeting organized by Consul General Jose Melencio. Later he attended a cocktail party given in his honor by Philippine-American Group of Commerce at the Union Club. During this occasion, he renewed acquaintance with many Americans who had been doing business in and with the Philippines for many years.

After a quick shopping trip which enables Quirino to buy a couple of fifth-avenue tailored suits and undergo a US army hospital checkup which pronounce him with perfect health, Quirino enplaned for London where he would be a guest of the British Government. In London He met Britain’s leading political and social personalities. He was received in special audience by King George VI at the Buckingham Palace, and foreign minister Ernest Bevin gave a formal reception in his honor. With the British Foreign Office he discussed the issues concerning the transfer of administration of the Turtle Islands to the Philippines as provided in the treaty between Great Britain and the United States signed in the 1930s which define the boundary between the Philippines and Borneo.

After a week’s stay in London, Quirino proceeded to France and Italy to expedite treaties with these countries and whence he would “bring home new practices, new development, new theories”. The trains having been paralyzed by a strike, Quirino had to fly to Paris by a special plane provided by the British government. In Paris he held conferences with Vincent Auriol at the Elysees Palace, Prime Minister Ramadier, and Mr. Heriot, President of the Chamber of Deputies. After signing the French-Philippines Treaty of Friendship, Quirino was conferred by the French government the rank of Grand Officer of the National Order of the Legion of Honor, the second highest decoration given by the French Republic to foreigners.

From Paris, Quirino went to Berlin where he was guest of American Military Government officials: General Lucius D. Clay, US Governor, and his deputy, General Keating, and Ambassador Murphy. Then he visited Switzerland as official guest of the Swiss Government for four days during which he only wanted to relax.

Quirino went to Rome to negotiate a Treaty of Amity and Friendship with Italy. He was the guest of honor at a state luncheon offered by the Foreign Minister at which Premier Alcide de Gasperi and other high ranking officials were also present. In Rome, Pope Pius XII received Quirino in the red and gold Vatican Library. The private audience had been arranged by the apostolic delegate in Manila before Quirino’s departure.

In Sweden, where he was welcomed as an official guest, Quirino was received by King Gustav. In the Netherlands, he conferred with Prime Minister Beel and Foreign Minister Van Oster Hout at The Hague. Quirino also visited Cairo, Egypt and Karachi, then still part of India. In Bangkok he was state guest in Suan Kularb Palace.

Quirino was developing the character and tact of sanguine public personality, qualities essential for diplomat which political leaders of other country would later observe him. Time Magazine, for instance, paid tribute to the newly
independent Republic’s first diplomat in these terms:

If it is the test of potential greatness of a people that it can produce the right man for the job at the right time, then the people of the Philippines, once again, have in the accomplishment of Vice-President Quirino on this journey, proved their capacity for greatness.

Starting July 4 1946 when President Roxas issued Executive Order No. 18 creating the Philippine Foreign Service, the Department of Foreign Affairs had been under Quirino’s personal leadership. He thus won the distinction of being the first Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic. After assuming the Presidency on the death of Roxas, Quirino continued to hold the position of Secretary of Foreign Affairs of the Republic in view of the tense international situation provoked by the Berlin crisis and the collapse of the United Nations-sponsored negotiations between the United States, its powerful Western allies and the Soviet Union.

The intimate link thus created between the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Presidency would enhance the credibility of the new Republic. To this end, Quirino then set up a suitable bureaucratic machinery to recommend, implement and supervise Philippine relations with other countries. In this manner, the Vice-President of the Republic was rescued from a dubious role of having nothing to do but wait for some sad misfortune to take over the Presidency. He was not only No.2 in the national political hierarchy but manager in charge of Philippine membership in the family of nations.

As Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Quirino was responsible for maintaining the diplomatic relations of the Republic with other countries; the recognition of newly independent states or disruption of relation in other states; Philippine representation in international bodies and institutions of which it is a member; the observance of treaties, convention and agreements to which it is a signatory, such as a treaty of amity and general relations, a treaty of navigation and commerce, and a treaty of diplomatic recognition, as well as the Charter of the United Nations. The nitty-gritty part of his responsibilities included supervision of Foreign Service Corps and its operation in different embassies, legations and consulates established in foreign countries and the special missions dispatched to various international gatherings and organizations.

Quirino supervised the membership of the Philippines in various international organizations including the United Nations General Assembly, the Ad Hoc Committee on Non-self governing territories, the Trusteeship Council, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on Economic Reconstruction of Devastated Areas, the Sub-Commission on Freedom of Information and of the Press, the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), The International Trade Organization (ITO), The International Labor Organization (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Korean Commission and the Palestine Commission.

With Quirino as its negotiator, the Philippine Government concluded and signed treaties with various countries of Europe and Asia. But it was the United States that the most important bilateral treaties and agreements were negotiated.
These included: the Treaty of General Relations, signed on July 4 1946; the Philippine Abaca Fiber Agreement, signed on 8 August 1946; the Treaty of Conciliation, signed on 16 November 1946; the Agreement on Fishery Rehabilitation and Development, signed on 14 March 1947; the Agreement on the Military Bases; signed on March 14 1947; the Military Assistance Agreement, signed on 20 March 1947; the Agreement on Meteorological Facilities and Training Program, signed on 12 May 1947; the Agreement on Air Navigation and Training Program, signed on 12 May 1947; the Agreement with the Liquidation Commission for the transfer of 90,000 tons of air force and ground force ammunition to Bauang and Rosario, La Union, signed on 6 February 1948; the Agreement Stipulating that 4,000,000 pesos of surplus property proceeds be used over a period of ten years to finance studies, research, instruction and other educational activities for citizens of the Philippines and the United States in school for institutions of higher learning in both countries, signed on 23 March 1948; the Postal Convention, signed on 17 September 1948; and the War Damage Agreement, signed on 27 August 1948.

A difficult situation for the Philippines developed when the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution asking member states to recall the heads of their diplomatic missions in Fascist Spain. The establishment the same year of diplomatic relation between the Philippines and Spain created an embarrassing dilemma for the government of Manila. The voting record of the Philippine delegation to the UN General Assembly reflected the strain and stress of the dilemma. Only after prolonged consultations between Roxas and Quirino did the Philippine Government decide to reciprocate the friendly gesture of the former colonial power. So as not to violate the UN General Assembly resolution Quirino established a legation in Madrid under a Charge d'Affaires instead of a Minister. Diplomatic relations with Spain were thus sustained through the legation in Madrid and further enhance by a goodwill visit of Miss Victoria “Vicky” Quirino, daughter of the President in 1948.

While Philippine action to the Spanish question in the United Nations has been cited as evidence of an independent Philippine foreign police, the voting patterns of the delegations of the two countries were strikingly parallel. They remain so today.

The Philippines eventually negotiated four treaties with Spain: the Treaty of Friendship and General Relations, signed on 24 September 1947; the Treaty of Civil Rights and Consular Prerogatives, signed on 20 May 1948; the Treaty on Academic Degrees and the Exercise of Professions and the Treaty on Cultural Relations both signed on 4 March 1949.

In another round of negotiations of treaty between the Philippines and China, disagreement of the negotiating parties over certain portions of the draft created an impasse which resulted in an exchange of communications between Vice-President Quirino and Chinese Minister Chen Chi-ping. The negotiation for a treaty of friendship with Nationalist China stood at the top of diplomatic priorities of the Roxas administration. The treaty aimed to define reciprocal rights of travel, residence, property and occupation, as well as diplomatic immunities and consular privileges. During the negotiations, the Philippine Government, represented by Quirino insisted on an explicit statement to the effect that the relations between the Philippines and the United States do not constitute a precedent justifying similar preferential treatment to China. The Chinese delegation, however, insisted that such
a provision was superfluous, non-applicable, and redundant. A second controversial issue concerned the proposed rights of Chinese nationals to engage in trade within the Philippines. Quirino sought to eliminate any provision relating to commerce in the proposed treaty, but Minister Chen insisted that the right of the Chinese nationals to trade within the Philippines properly belonged to a treaty of friendship and therefore should not be classified as international commerce.

The treaty was finally signed with the approval of both President Roxas and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of the Chinese Republic. During the ceremonies on the exchange of ratification held at Malacañang on 24 October 1947, the ever-diplomatic Quirino delivered a brief speech invoking the cause of international friendship as the common goal of all peace-loving nations.

China was actually the first country to establish a legation to the Philippines. To reciprocate this friendly gesture, the Philippine Government established a legation in Nanking and a consulate General in Shanghai. But the Chinese Communist ascendancy on the Asian Mainland in 1949 posed two problems for the Philippines. The first was an internal one which involved increased control over Chinese immigration. The other was an external one which called for a decision on whether the Philippine Government would recognize the new Chinese regime or not.

On the first issue, Quirino tried to keep the door closed to Chinese evacuees and immigrants from China. The Philippine government, through its consulate in Shanghai offered its temporary acceptance only of friendly nationals among the refugees from China whose country had negotiated treaties with the Philippines. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) then sent to Philippines about 8,000 non-Chinese evacuees from China and requested for their temporary residence in Guiuan, Samar. Filipinos, about 200 of them, who had been living in Shanghai, were repatriated by the Philippine Government. Moreover, Congress often tightened general immigration regulations in 1950 by reducing the country quotas from 500 to 50. It did not legislate, however, on the matter of estimated 50,000 Chinese who had entered the country since 1947 on one-year permits.

On the second issue concerning the recognition of the Communist government of China, Quirino kept an open mind until after the Chinese Communist participation in the Korean war. On 10 October 1949, the anniversary of the national day of the Chinese Nationalist Government, the Department of Foreign affairs received an official communication from the Premier Chou En-lai through the Philippine consulate in Shanghai. The message announced the establishment in Peking of the Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China and invited diplomatic relations with the Philippines. Initial official Philippine reaction was ambivalent. After a conference with Quirino the same day, the former consul general in Shanghai, Mariano Ezpeleta, declared that he had recommended that the Philippines “take a realistic attitude towards Communist China”.

Quirino favored a laissez-faire approach. In his inaugural address as President on 30 December 1949, he expressed respect for the political right of neighboring countries to choose freely their own system of government. “In our relation with the Chinese people,” he said, “with whom we had such close contacts over many centuries, we shall maintain an open mind giving due heed to the requirements of our national security and security of Asia as a whole.” During a visit to the United States, he told the press in San Francisco that the
on Quirino’s instructions, voted for the admission of Israel as member of the United Nations. The Philippine recognition of the new government of Israel was fully consistent with the Philippine official stand that the right of the Palestinians to a homeland was not inconsistent with the right of Israel to exist as a separate state.

The Philippines was a founding member of the United Nations. Not yet independent, it was represented by Dr. Carlos P. Romulo in the San Francisco conference of 1945 which adopted the charter of the United Nations. From that time onward, the Philippines became a leading exponent of causes to which the United Nations is dedicated: liberation of colonial territories, promotion and defense of human rights, economic assistance to Third World countries, and maintenance of international peace and security. The consistent commitment of the Philippines to the cause of peace, freedom, cooperation, development and security had its roots in the long exposure of Vice-President, and later, President Quirino as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. In the same spirit the Philippines supported the North Atlantic Pact as a “treaty of non-aggression” which could serve as a model for a parallel agreement among the nations of East Asia and the Pacific Basin – an arrangement which Quirino advocated at least a decade before the Maphilindo proposal of President Macapagal and the ASEAN agreement reached in the time of President Marcos.
CHAPTER 5

Ascent to The Top

The Anemone, the government coastguard cutter, had been refitted for the use of high government dignitaries. On April 9, Quirino, accompanied by daughter Vicky and son Tomas with his wife boarded the vessel on a cruise to the Visayas. While in Baguio the previous week, the Vice-president had complained of a certain feeling of “heaviness” to his physician; the latter prescribed a rest. The Vice-president appeared to be suffering from an overworked heart. But since he had previously accepted some speaking engagements in the Visayas, it was thought that a cruise on the way of fulfilling those commitments and back might provide Quirino the much needed rest.

On April 16, at 7:15 a.m. while the Anemone was 190 miles south of Manila, the radio message bringing news of the death of President Roxas was received. The President had visited Clark Field a day before and suffered cardiac arrest while delivering a speech. A military aide broke the news to the Vice-President. Grieved by the news, Quirino wept silently and remained in bed for a full half hour. The newspapermen who accompanied him waited outside talking quietly among themselves. First mate Joaquin Tenorio recalled seeing a strange light in the sky during the night.

Sometime later when Quirino came out of his cabin, he told the newsmen, “I can’t believe it.” When confirmation came from Malacañang, a benumbed silence settled upon the Anemone. Quirino paced the deck, pensive and sad. He ordered the Philippine flag flown by the cutter lowered to half-mast.

On that same day, executive secretary Emilio Abello made radio contact with the Anemone to ask Quirino if he would board an amphibian PBY plane of the US navy which would be dispatched to meet the Anemone so as to hasten his return to Manila. On the advice of his attending physician, Quirino told Abello that he would stay on the ship and arrive the following morning.

He then directed Secretary Nicanor Roxas to convene a meeting of the Council of State immediately upon his arrival, and to instruct government officials in Manila to remain at their posts, while those out of the city should be asked to return promptly. He concluded his instructions with a request: “Kindly take good care of Mrs. Roxas.” Then he faced the newspapermen aboard the Anemone who had been asking for an audience with him. Quirino read a short statement:

“The passing of President Manuel Roxas is a loss hard to bear. He was my dear friend and beloved chief. As the first President of the Philippine Republic, he was the architect of this new nation and no one can replace him. Although called upon to continue his patriotic labors, I doubt if my frail shoulders can carry the grave
of State room in the executive building for the oath-taking.

He expressed the hope that the people would soon recover from the shock and see things clearly. “For the present,” he told the newspapermen, “I prefer to do more thinking than talking in view of the situation created by President Roxas’ death.”

On the 17th, the anemone docked at pier 13 where a big crowd of government officials, friends and admirers were waiting for Quirino. The presidential guard under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Jose Tando was also there.

Before Quirino disembarked, he conferred with Senate President Jose Avelino, members of the cabinet, and other government officials. From the south jarbor, Quirino went directly to Malacañang; riding in Car No. 1.

He entered the palace flanked by Senate President Avelino, Senate President Protempore Melecio Arranz, and Senator Enrique Magalona, followed by a crowd of mourners. Going straight to the casket, he laid his head on the part of the coffin which was open showing the face of the dead President, and wept unashamedly, until he was taken away by Avelino and Arranz.

Quirino proceeded to the anteroom where he met Mrs. Aurora Quezon and Mrs. Rosario Acuña de Picazo, Roxas’ mother. He kissed their hands and sat with the mother of Roxas; then he asked to be taken to the room of Miss Ruby Roxas where the president’s widow, Doña Trinidad de Leon Roxas, was lying in bed. After expressing his sympathy, he went to the Council responsibilities. I only hope that God and our good people will give me sufficient strength and courage to carry on.”

The room was crowded. Quirino read the oath silently to himself before the ceremony. Upon the arrival of budget commissioner Pio Pedrosa, the ceremony started. Quirino stood up and asked Chief Justice Ricardo Paras, “Mr. Chief justice, will you now administer of the oath?”

He signed seven copies of the oath, using two gold pens. It was the third oath he had taken in less than two years – the first as the Vice-President of the Commonwealth, and the second as the Vice-President of the Republic. After prolonged applause by the crowd and cries of “Long live the President!” he made a brief statement:

“In memory of our great and illustrious friend who is now lying in state, let us pledge ourselves to establish better and closer understanding among us, and I beseech you to manifest more tolerance, goodwill, and love, which we need in this supreme moment of our history.”

Speaker Eugenio Perez was the first to congratulate him. Vicky then approached and kissed her father, followed by Tomas and his wife. The ceremony was over. The time was 9:45 a.m.

Throughout its long history, Malacañang palace, home of Spanish and American Governor and Generals, has undergone a series of alterations and innovations usually announcing the arrival of a new Chief Executive and portraying a distinct character. President Manuel Quezon, for instance, the first Filipino leader to reside in the palace, created a five-hectare park across the Pasig River which, since its establishment, has well served the needs of harassed political leaders for
recreation and renewal. It gave Quezon a spacious field for horse-riding, a nine-hole golf course for President Roxas, a swimming pool for president Quirino’s afternoon relaxation, and a habitat for various pets and fowls offered as gifts by friends and state visitors of the successive Malacañang residents: goats from India, horses from America, cocks from Texas, pigs from New Guinea, birds from China, and kangaroos from Australia which the Australian philanthropist, E.J. Hallstrom gave to Quirino.

When Quirino became President of the Republic, he did not move into Malacañang until after the palace was refurbished, its draperies changed and the furniture replaced. His occupancy of the official residence coincided with the visit that year of Francis Cardinal Spellman, archbishop of New York. A dramatic blending of red and black formal robes worn by high Filipino and American church officials and the presence of the celebrities listening quietly to soft background music marked Quirino’s official entry into his new home.

Malacañang palace had received its periodic facelift. Its new occupants apparently had different tastes and its grandeur therefore had to be refashioned. The palace had a fresh coat of paint or varnish and new furniture as needed, clean columns and sparkling chandeliers. Some of the rooms were redecorated with paintings – of a sunset for the ante-sala or a woman’s face for the living room – in pastels. In the dining room a table stood which Mrs. Aurora Quezon had ordered made of several varieties of Philippine hardwood.

Quirino’s daughter, Vicky, recalls that a mestiza by the name of Amalia Pastor was hired to assist in refurbishing Malacañang. In an interview, Vicky relates:

... the chandeliers were taken down during the [Japanese] occupation and were hidden. No, [the palace] was not destroyed but it [was] not in tip-top shape because it had not been fixed since Quezon moved in. That was in the 1930s. 

... what happened was the linen for example was fraying, the curtains also needed fixing... the China was broken. ... And the only rooms the he [Quirino] really ordered to be refurbished were my bedroom which has also served as Ruby Roxas’ bedroom and where they brought President Roxas’ body from Clark airfield - and his [Quirino’s] official bedroom, which was an old room. ... I don’t know who occupied it previously if it had ever been occupied. ... There was also a two-bedroom suite, varnished and quite dreary... And the cost of all the furniture in the President’s bedroom came to about 5,000 pesos.

Quirino’s initial tour of the palace grounds revived long-suppressed feeling about the brutality of the Japanese occupation. Noticing an exquisite Japanese tea house built at the southwest corner of the river bank, he immediately ordered the dainty little hut torn down, replacing it with a fashionable bahay kubo of native sawali and fine hard wood, with a nipa roof and bamboo floor, adorned with rattan furniture, local pottery and a salakot lampshades. Here he would relax as often as he could get away from the pressures of the presidency.

On weekends Quirino would sometimes motor to Tagaytay to relish the simple grandeur of Lake Taal and the flaming sunset beyond. At other times, he would fly to Baguio for a cool and refreshing vacation at the Presidential Mansion. Or take a leisurely boat ride around Manila Bay on the
presidential yacht the s.s. Apo to replenish his energies before
delivering an official address or presiding a cabinet meeting
the following day.

At the palace, Quirino’s daily routine began early in the
morning and usually ended at midnight.

Breakfast began his normal, daily routine during which he
would always have somebody for in a breakfast conference.
His early morning ritual then proceeded when reading the
morning newspaper followed by a session with a stenographer
who noted down the early morning presidential thoughts.
He maintained a staff of four stenographers. Official duties
were then performed either at the Presidential office in the
Executive building or in his private study inside the palace.
Quirino sometimes worked in his bedroom. Calls on the
President were scheduled shortly after nine o’clock in the
morning until one o’clock in the afternoon. Official visitors who
called on the President included members of the diplomatic
and consular crops, department secretaries, senators,
provincial governors, mayors and other government officials
or political leaders. These calls often delayed the start of
cabinet meetings usually scheduled for 11 o’clock.

Lunch, normally, was also with people and followed by an
hour’s siesta. Depending on his daily schedule, Quirino would
also manage to swim before returning to his office.

Quirino set aside weekends for his family and personal callers
who would usually join the family Sunday mass. And during
Saturday nights, Vicky Quirino recalls,

... He would have three-hour poker game with his old friends
but not for high stakes. It was purely for relaxation and then
after dinner he would have a movie. Sometimes he would
match just for a little while because he would be tired, that is,
if we didn’t have a dinner, I mean, a formal dinner or a party.

Quirino, however, usually never finished a whole movie as he
would retire to bed early. But there was a movie each night
since it was a part of the standard operating procedure in
Malacañang. According to Vicky Quirino:

The state dining room would be converted into a projection
room; they [Malacañang personnel] would just bring in sofas
and chairs we would sit there and watch. After the showing
the chairs would be taken out and the area converted back
into the state dining room. It was SOP for the president to
have some form of relaxation and that’s when he would invite
family and friends to join him watch a movie.

Parties formed part of Quirino’s standard routine at
Malacañang. Official dinners were usually catered and
attended to by the palace chef. Vicky Quirino describes the
Malacañang parties:

There was no particular form of entertainment ... Once in a
while it would be a dance, not too often though. He [Quirino]
would hold a diplomatic ball once a year. That was a big thing
and would start maybe with a rigodon ... then there would
be a New Year’s Day reception which would be a sort of open
house for government’s officials, the diplomatic people, and
personnel friends. Who came to the parties? It all depended
on the occasion.

When Quirino assumed the presidency, the nation expected
him to be sympathetic, generous and strong kuya always
ready to listen to sorts of problems, daily, from Monday to
Sunday. Shortly after taking his oath to the office, Quirino
had outlined the main tasks and challenges faced by his administration: the complete restoration of peace and order and revitalization of the people’s faith and confidence in their government. Quirino well knew that he was taking on a herculean tasks. His first schedule of official activities upon assuming the presidency implied as much:

April 17 – takes oath of office as President of the Philippines; presides over extraordinary meeting of Council of State followed by Cabinet meeting; proclaims 30 day mourning for the late president Roxas; announces the establishment of peace and order and strengthening of people’s faith in the Government as immediate goal;
April 18 – signs bill authorizing corporations to issue new certificates for reconstituted lost ones.
April 20 – holds first press conference; indicates desire to create press cabinet; emphasizes inviolability of decisions of nation’s highest tribunal; banning aliens from owning urban properties; initiates re-examination of Huk policy to make implementation conform with trend of public opinion; political leaders welcome him and pledge support;
April 21 – orders issuance of regulations according honorably discharged men of AFP additional five points to civil service ratings.
April 25 – leads nation in paying homage to departed leader.
April 27 – instructs Secretary of Justice to affect transfer of 10,000 hectares under Davao Penal Colony to National Abaca and Fibers Corporation to give impetus to abaca production; dispatches NARIC manager to Washington, D.C. to work for 100,000 tons of rice allocation for the Philippines from the International Emergency Food Council.
April 28 – receives doctor of law degree, honoris causa, from Adamson University; declares urgent need for trained men in peace or war in commencement address.

To enable him to deal with the various problems facing his administration, Quirino drew strength from a rich fund of experience accumulated in the course of a long and varied political career, his familiarity with the most important and delicate features of the international scene, and his management expertise.
official of the government”. And he appealed to the press to avoid baseless personal attacks. Charges and insinuations of graft and corruption in government filled the air. He found himself surrounded by a fetid atmosphere of evil. Quirino sincerely believe that after the cruel suffering that the Filipino endured during more than three years of war and a bitter enemy occupation, they were entitled to “settle down to a quiet and peaceful life in order to plan and to recuperate”.

The council of state functioned as an important advisory body to the President. Headed by the Chief Executive himself, it was composed of the members of the cabinet, the leaders of both houses of Congress - the President and the President Protempore of the Senate, the Speaker and the Speaker Protempore of the house, the majority leaders of the two chambers, and three highly respective private citizens --- former President Sergio Osmeña, former Chief Justice Ramon Avanceña of the supreme court and former speaker Jose Yulo. On the suggestion of then Speaker Sergio Osmeña in 1917, the council of state was created during the American colonial regime as an official organ by which harmonious working relations between the Philippine legislature and he cabinet could be facilitated. During the Quirino administration, the members of the Council of State, the cabinet and a few technical experts made up the presidential advisory body.

Quirino took a long time to undertake the much needed reorganization of his government. He thus allowed the members of the Roxas government to stay for more than five months. His first official meetings were attended by the 11 department heads, who attended the cabinet meetings, the budget commissioner, the commissioner of social welfare, the executive secretary, the press secretary and the auditor general.

The country was plagued with various problems, and public demand for government house cleaning was becoming more insistent and urgent. Quirino well knew that his oath of office as President charged him with the duty of supervising all the departments of the government and its instrumentalities. He wanted every office to set a standard of public service following the standards he had set in the Department of Foreign Affairs. The task of rehabilitation and reconstruction was being retarded mainly because of the difficulty of maintaining peace and order and gaining the people’s confidence in government. Quirino realized that to lay down and implement an effective program of economic rehabilitation and reconstructions would require the performance of their duties. He fully concurred with a loud and insistent public clamor for him to weed out all “undesirable elements” from the government. It was his duty to make his stand clear on that matter. In one of his first public statements he promised that he “would not shield any erring
Quirino realized that “where to begin and how to begin cleaning, if we listened to the press at that time, was already laid out for me. If I had the feeling that as soon as I took the driver’s seat left vacant by my worthy predecessor, a whole bunch of press writers took possession of the back seat from which the avalanche of orders ensued. They scolded me; they threatened me; and they called me all sorts of names if I did not do exactly what they thought I ought to do”. He admitted sadly that indeed the quality of government service had suffered together with the standard of national life instead. He confessed: “As I saw it that day on the Anemone at sea, and in the days and weeks and months to follow, the urgency of restoring peace and order, especially in Central and Southern Luzon, was a problem of the first priority.” He wanted to speed up the program of national reconstruction which Roxas had initiated despite the difficulties created by the Huk dissidents. He recalled that at the very moment on 17 April when he disembarked from the Anemone and proceeded to Malacañang to take his oath of office, he knew that the challenge posed by the Hucks required his immediate attention. At the same time, it was necessary to strengthen the people’s confidence in his new administration.

Quirino knew, and in fact had been repeatedly reminding himself that the Filipino people had “more than their share in the years of the occupation in deprivations of food, clothing and shelter. They had enough brutalization by enemy occupation and the cruel exigencies of liberation”. Since the proclamation of independence in 1946, the task of reconstruction had been set back by the failure of the nation to settle down and work in complete tranquility. Harassment by dissidents in the form of raids, ambushes, kidnapping and seizure of rice harvest had been frequent. No less than 95 armed clashes broke out between dissidents and government forces during a two-year period until January 1948.

On 21 September 1948, Quirino presided over the last meeting of the old outgoing cabinet. During this meeting he announced the new member of the cabinet:

- **Foreign Affairs**: President Quirino (acting)
- **Interior**: Sotero Baluyut (Pampanga)
- **Finance**: Pio Pedrosa (Leyte)
- **Justice**: Sabino Padilla (Manila)
- **Agricultural and National Resources**: Placido Mapa (Negros Occidental)
- **Public Works and Communications**: Ricardo Nepomuceno (Marinduque)
- **Education**: Prudencio Langcauon (Albay)
- **Labor**: Primitivo Lovina (Leyte)
- **National Defense**: Ruperto Kangleon (Leyte)
- **Health**: Antonio Villarama (Bulacan)
- **Commerce and Industry**: Cornelio Balmaceda (Ilocos Norte)
- **Executive Secretary**: Teodoro Evangelista (Bulacan)
- **Budget Commissioner**: Pio Joven (Ilocos Norte)
- **Social Welfare**: Mrs. Asuncion Perez (Marinduque)
By his choice of the members of the new cabinet, Quirino hoped to assure the people that a better and a more stable political life lay ahead of them. He intended to rid the government of old, traditional political whose power and influence was based merely on their ability to buy votes. By emphasizing that his decision was based solely on the merits of the men and women of the new cabinet, Quirino wanted to present his administration as the Manila equivalent of the Rooseveltian New Deal in Washington.

The public, particularly the press, closely monitored and praised Quirino’s efforts at reinvigorating the nation’s political life with a fresh and promising new batch of officials. Melchor Aquino, for instance, in his New scope column in the Evening news (1948 September) proclaimed: “By choosing to stand firmly on his rights, cost what it may, rather than insure congressional support at the sacrifice of the same rights, President Quirino has thwarted what looks like political blackmail, and given the new dimension of honor to the position he holds, “A Manila Daily Bulletin editorial affirmed that the men and women in the new cabinet “are in the cabinet not because they are being rewarded for party campaign contribution or because they guarantee specified number of Liberal party votes, but because they’ve got what it takes.” In the same editorial, Langcauon’s inclusion in the new official family was endorsed as a tribute to the hard working school teachers, while Balmaceda’s appointment was regarded as a recognition of individuals whose lives had long been devoted to government service, and the choice of Evangelista as an indication of Quirino’s “sound administrative reasoning and planning”. For its part, the Manila Chronicle singled out Pio Joven, the new Budget Commissioner, as an embodiment of the training and experience for the “intricate requirements of the new office”.

Quirino explained that his choice of Langcauon, a school teacher, should be taken as an act indicative of his own high regard for hard-working school teachers like him, and their capacity to rise in the social hierarchy. He declared that Secretary of interior Sotero Baluyut was chosen primarily because of his “unquestioned integrity, experience and proven devotion to public service.” It was the responsibility, he said, of the members of the ruling hierarchy to give young, promising individuals the opportunity to prepare themselves for higher positions in the government service. Thus, his choice of young Evangelista as member of the cabinet was a case in point.

Quirino pointed to the elevation of Balmaceda from Under Secretary to Secretary of Commerce and Industry as simply a “natural reward for his efficiency, devotion to the duty, and his loyalty to the government.” By appointing Mrs. Asuncion Perez as Commissioner of Social Welfare, the President said that he wanted to highlight the Amelioration Program as one of the most Important programs of his administration by elevating it, through a department secretary, to cabinet level. He also wanted to “honor the fair sex by giving it representation at the highest level of the administration of the affairs of the government”. Quirino noted that the creation of the new office entailed the approval of a law to legitimize the newly created position. Hence, Mrs. Perez was a cabinet member without portfolio. He justified his action by pointing out as President he could “invite anybody to sit with me at my meetings in the cabinet. I can request cooperation to any citizen. But no portfolio”.

Following the announcement of the new cabinet, a group of varsitarians from Mindanao and Sulu march to the palace to
request inclusion of a representative from Southern Islands in the new official family. Quirino met the delegation, listen to its plea and explained: “It is alright for each region in the country to have representation in the cabinet, but it is not as easy as that. The moral technical qualifications, prestige, experience and knowledge of each prospective appointee to the cabinet must be considered above all else, not barring the geographical considerations.” And in response to the criticism that the Muslims had no representation in the government, Quirino remarked: “You have no better representation in the cabinet and in the entire government service, for that matter, than myself because, as you probably know, I am a full-fledged datu of Sulu.”

On 24 September, the new cabinet held its first business meeting at the palace. Quirino stressed the responsibilities of each department secretary as well as the duties and functions of respective offices. He required his cabinet members to provide him with periodic update of the work on the different departments and instructed them “unless a departmental matter involves modification of a standing policy or initiates a new one or concerns other departments, the secretary concerned can take action by himself on his own responsibility.”

Once more, the ever watchful press immediately took note of the new policy that Quirino had adopted for his new cabinet. It was a “wise step” according to the Evening News (1948 September), adding that “this unprecedented delimitation of presidential control and supervision over the executive departments is in keeping with the philosophy of our political system, which frowns upon centralization of authority. The editorial explained: “In a sense, the cabinet will function henceforth as the President’s council, concerned, collectively, with only matters of policy. In this respect, the Quirino cabinet will more closely approximate than any past cabinet the Anglo-Saxon concept of a cabinet”.

The cabinet meetings were at times tension-laden—for instance, the meeting, with Quirino presiding, which discussed the controversial grant of a bid for the construction of the library building of the University of the Philippines recommended by the University President, Bienvenido M. Gonzalez. On one side, Secretary of Education Prudencio Langcauon and Secretary of Finance Pio Pedrosa were defending Gonzalez and on the other, Executive Secretary Teodoro Evangelista and Ricardo Nepomuceno, Secretary of Public Works and Communications and Budget Commissioner Pio Joven were opposing the bid. After listening quietly to the heated debate, Quirino intervened to advise his cabinet “not to lose their head over Gonzalez and the bid”. The cabinet approved the public bidding.

At certain moments, cabinet meetings moved at a leisurely and fun-filled pace. Quirino himself recalled, for example, a cabinet meeting in Tagaytay. He happened to ask in Tagalog, his Visayan Secretary of National Defense, Ruperto Kangleon about the site of the proposed camp of the Philippine Army. And the Visayan official quickly replied in genuine Ilocano: “Idiay Camp Murphy, Apo.” Quirino, on other occasions, would joke with his cabinet. For instance, when his administration was being bombarded with charges of graft and corruption and was presented a resolution calling for impeachment of the President, Quirino flippantly reminded his secretaries to be discreet in the use of public funds lest they be charged also with graft and corruption and will be subjected to impeachment.
Quirino and his new cabinet held its meetings in Malacañang or, occasionally, at the Ridge Lodge at Tagaytay, at the Mansion House in Baguio, or aboard the Presidential yacht, APO. Cabinet meetings were normally scheduled after lunch and opened with the Executive Secretary presenting the various items of the agenda, and the President calling for discussions and consensus. The deliberations usually lasted two hours, after which a light merienda of softdrinks and sandwiches would be served.

Quirino maintained a staff of four doctors (all regular physicians of the Philippine General Hospital) under the supervision of Dr. Agerico B.M. Sison, of the College of Medicine, University of the Philippines who took turns in attending to his health needs every day. His doctors had advised him to end the meetings at one o’clock to assure the regular periods of relaxation he needed to remain in good shape. There were days however, when the cabinet meetings took so long that the presidential physician would interrupt Quirino to remind him of the time. And he would instantly adjourn the session after saying that the unfinished agenda items would be taken up at the next meeting.

A presidential secretariat, headed by the Executive Secretary and officially designated as the Executive Office or Office of the President assisted Quirino in most of his official functions and activities. Since it served as the operational center through which the President exercised his general and supervisory authority over the national, provincial, city, and municipal governments, the presidential secretariat took on a wide range of task and responsibilities, including requests for information and financial aid for the opening of the new schools, construction and reconstruction of the public works projects damaged in the last war; adjudication and settlements of public war damaged claims; promotion of the welfare of the people in the rural districts; relief to victims of typhoons, floods, fire, earthquakes, volcanic eruption, crop failure, epidemics, or unsatisfactory peace and war conditions; solicitations for intervention in pending cases regarding land applications, redress of grievances, reconsideration of unrecognized guerrilla units, transfer of alien property to Philippine government, purchase by the government of haciendas or big landed estates for resale to the tenants, and protection of farmers and peasants against abusive landlords and land-grabbers.

Accompanying Quirino everyday and practically every minute of each day were his bodyguards and aides-de-camp. An army officer with a rank of full colonel headed the President’s military and naval aides who guarded Quirino wherever he went in and out of Malacañang around the country and abroad. Assigned to the President was a loyal valet who attended the President’s personal necessities, and slept in the presidential room of the palace.

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In his State of the nation Address, Quirino had emphasized what had always been an important concern of the administration: the President’s personal reaching out to the “common tao”. He reminded the nation: “This is the age of the common man. This government has long stopped preaching. It goes out to the field with an action committee. . . . This is my all-absorbing and consuming passion. We have to insure a standard living in the farms, in the factories, in the homes that will be more in the keeping and commensurate with our progress and advancement.” In most of his surprise visits around the country Quirino was accompanied by a
encounters insightful and pleasing, others angered him. In Alfonso, Cavite, for instance, a lame old man identified as Miranda, met Quirino and donated one hectare of his land to the government through the President as a market site for his barrio, Luksuhin. But in Quezon, he quickly noted the negligence of the people assigned to take charge of the medical surplus depot. Quirino immediately ordered Arsenio N. Luz, the chairperson, to take the necessary corrective measures.

In Manila, Quirino inspected slum areas where he met with city government officials and promised the slum dwellers the necessary sanitary facilities, water supply, and ample protection from food black-marketers. Quirino visited the barong-barong of the slums, walked across filthy mudholes and piles of foul-smelling garbage and shared a meal with some residents.

It was the trip to the Ilocos region, Quirino’s own, that proved to be one of the more controversial visits. Critics argued that the Ilocos visit was a sheer “show-off”, part of the presidential propaganda. Vigan was transformed into the capital of the nation for three days. Quirino had brought the entire cabinet with him and presided at a regular cabinet meeting during the visit to his home town.

It was his first visit to the home region since he assumed office as President. Vigan, his hometown, undertook special preparations for the homecoming of its most distinguished son. All the other towns visited by Quirino did the same.

Quirino had invited the members of the cabinet and foreign representatives as his house guests. His two children, Tommy, with his wife Nena, and Vicky went along, bringing their friends.
of construction, not of rivalry but of national charity ... I explained that the trip was in line with my policy of bringing the government closer to the people and of seeing for myself actual conditions and needs with a view to their proper solution. These tours, I said, undeniably enabled me to apportion better the aid and benefit that may be extended to each locality in accordance with the administration’s program of social amelioration and rural development.”

That Quirino’s trips were politically motivated was a perception shared by many. For instance, Celso G. Cabrera, a columnist of the Manila Chronicle (1949 January), refereed to Quirino’s visit to the Bicol provinces as a “political success”. Accompanied by top government officials and representatives of the Manila press, Quirino visited Sorsogon, Bulusan, Barcelona, Gubat, Albay, and Legaspi where he appealed for economic cooperation with his administration, recalled the achievements of the first year of his administration and highlighted the balancing of the budget, revival of local industries, investigation and prosecution of corrupt government officials, restoration of peace and order in certain troubled areas, and extension of the social amelioration program.

Quirino made the same appeal to people in the Visayas. In Cebu, a military escort met him at the dock and accompanied him to Plaza Independencia for a meeting with thousands of Cebuanos. In a dispatch to the Evening News (December 1948), Gwekoh noted Quirino’s appeal to the youth, particularly to their sense of the future. “At the very beginning, the youth should be taught”, Quirino said, “the necessity of clean thinking and plain living to enable them to become worthy leaders of the country”. Quirino stressed the value of “good fellowship”, insisting that “the essence of good government lies in good fellowship as much as in good leadership”.

A provincial fair and exposition at Vigan, with the provinces of Northern Luzon participating, seemed calculated to give the impression that the Ilocos had fully recovered from the war.

Senator Lorenzo Tañada, Quirino would later reminisce, tried to belittle the importance of the Ilocos visit by denouncing it as an extravagance. Quirino, he said, had invited official guests and had taken along even his children to their ancestral home. Quirino explained that it was customary in all his inspection trips “to invite cabinet members, bureau chiefs and directors, as well as members of Congress so that they could see for themselves and discuss on the spot problems presented to our attention by the country folk”. His trip to Ilocos was therefore no different from the others, except that fellow Ilocanos took advantage of the occasion to show their traditional hospitality by offering accommodations, transportation and entertainment for their guests, for which Vigan, and cultural and historical center of the north, has long been known.

The visit provided excellent publicity for the region. Quirino would say afterwards in fond recollection: “I was met by a delegation of all political parties expressing their united support for me. Moved by this demonstration I extended political ‘amnesty’ to those who had been fighting me as a minority leader in the province, including Congressman Floro Crisologo, former Governor Pedro Singson Reyes, and former Representative Fidel Villanueva, the first two being Nacionalistas. They all subsequently changed their allegiance and joined the Liberal Party, which in fact brought unity in the province ... Speaking on the problem that confronted the government, I observed that this is not the age of politics but of economics. This is not the age of obstruction but
Quirino proceeded to Camiguin island then sailed on to Cagayan, Misamis Oriental where a fluvial parade made up of 60 outrigger boats adorned with bunting and accompanied by a brass band on a floating stand met him. His hectic schedule in Cagayan included the laying of the cornerstone of the provincial capitol, a conference with the local officials and a mass meeting at night. In a speech, he presented his plan to make Mindanao “an empire of prosperity and contentment” in an effort to solicit more support for his administration and its projects. During the cornerstone-laying ceremony, Quirino appealed for unity, referring to the cornerstone being laid as a “symbol of the solid foundation of the province in its economic and political life”. He joined his daughter Vicky in planting a mahogany memorial tree.

Quirino’s trip to the Huk provinces of Central Luzon electrified the nation. It was hailed everywhere as a prelude to peace. Congressional and administration leaders strongly endorsed it. The Manila Daily Bulletin (1948 April), announced in a streamer PRESIDENT INSPECTS HEART OF HUKLAND. The Manila Times (1948 April) declared in its headline: QUIRINO VISITS HUK PROVINCES. The President’s venture into the “no man’s land territory” was perceived as indicating Quirino’s genuine desire to resolve the serious Hukbalahap problem which had been plaguing the national life. Six Twice, Quirino had been dissuaded by his close advisers from visiting Huklandia. But twice the President ignored his advisers. “There is nothing to fear”, Quirino assured the nation. “As Vice-President, I had safely travelled the same highways. The Huks know I have always been attached to social reform. I come from the masses. In my sincere efforts to alleviate the suffering of our people in Central Luzon due to dislocated peace and order conditions, I had stooped down to meet a free Luis Taruc, had
The economy after the war was utterly devastated, but beneath the debris the challenge remained: to transform it from a colonial to a modern industrial economy able to meet the ever growing needs of a population which in 1951 was 20.6 million or 33.8 percent more than the 1937 figure of 15.4 million. The need for reform was admitted by such Quirino technocrats as Miguel Cuaderno, finance secretary in the first Quirino cabinet and later the first Governor of the Central Bank. Writing shortly before the end Quirino’s presidency, Cuaderno said “there is . . . sufficient reason to believe that the postwar pattern of the economy, up to the imposition of trade controls [in 1949], was seriously defective.” Cuaderno also observed that “an outstanding feature of that economy was the importance in it of foreign trade.” Perennial importation in huge quantities means of course that an economy cannot supply many of its own needs, from consumption goods to machinery and raw materials needed by the factories.

One approach towards rectifying the situation which was suggested by Cuaderno, in view of the tight constraints in resources which the government faced, was to secure grants and loans from the United States. Consequently, in 1948, Philippine Ambassador to the United States, Joaquin M. Elizalde, took up with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development the request of the country for financing the dollar exchange requirements of the hydro-electric program and proposed fertilizer plant. Earlier, the Bank had sent a mission to the Philippines to gather up-to-date information on political and social developments since liberation.

The result of the negotiations with the bank was a comprehensive rehabilitation and development program which was supplemented later on by future agreements, grants and loans.

It might be said that it was Quirino’s misfortune that he became a President at the time he did and that he was President a much longer period than the first two post-war Filipino Chief Executives. While Osmeña and Roxas were burdened with the task of rebuilding the country and its economy, they did not have to cope with the problems Quirino’s faced. Quirino inherited Osmeña’s and Roxas’ problems and he also had to deal with the new ones.

The problems that confronted President Quirino were entirely of a different order. They were second generation problems so to speak – problems that resulted from policies pursued by the two previous Presidents. Osmeña and Roxas had laid down the ground-rules and Quirino was obliged to operate within the limits defined by them.

Roxas was unable to wean the economy from dependence on the American market, and the problem of dealing with the crisis that arose in 1949 as a result of dependence fell on the lap of Quirino.
Again, as will be seen later, the grandiose plans of the program formulated no less by the “economic genius of the Quirino administration,” Miguel Cuaderno, who must be credited with invigorating the project, fell short of realization owing to diplomatic and economic impediments inherent to the nature of Philippine-US relations.

The thrust of Quirino’s economic policy was to increase government revenues through improved tax collection and reform to the task system, increase total economic output, and diversify and modernize the economy principally through industrialization and infrastructure building. Quirino was able to achieve his objectives only partially. As regards his long-term objectives, judgment was about evenly divided.

A close examination of Quirino’s economic policies during the entire period of his presidency reveals a certain ambivalence and tension inherent in any attempt to achieve short-term and long-term goals simultaneously.

On one hand pressing problems such as budget deficits and adverse balance-of-payments which demanded immediate solution; on the other was the need to introduce long-term measures that would reform the economy and prevent recurrence of the problems Quirino was then facing. This ambivalence is best seen in his total economic mobilization program which was the mix of emergency measures and long-range projects.

The Quirino development policies and programs must be considered in the context of Philippine-American relations since they were in no small measure influenced by the United States through US sponsored economic missions such as the Joint Philippine-American Finance Commission and the Bell Trade mission.

Quirino therefore really had few options open to him. The legal or institutional framework had been set during the presidency of Roxas. The Philippine Trade Act or the Bell Trade Act as it was more commonly known unquestionably determined the course of the economy. It was passed the American Congress in 1946 together with the Rehabilitation Act. The disbursement of rehabilitation Funds as provided in the Rehabilitation Act was made contingent on the acceptance by the Philippines of the Bell Trade Act. The newly elected congress on the impending republic was virtually under compulsion to accept the Bell Trade Act. It accordingly ratified the executive agreement implementing the act as a midnight decision on the eve of independence on July 4, 1946, the very day when the Act would come into force. The date July 4, 1946 was chosen for the effectivity of the Act to circumvent the requirement of ratification by the Philippine senate of treaty, the form which the trade Act must assume if it were to become effective after the proclamation of the Republic. The Trade Act was therefore, to all intents and purposes, a piece of colonial legislation.

Section 341 of the Bell Trade Act provided:

The disposition, exploitation, development, and utilization of all agricultural, timber and mineral lands of the public domain, waters, minerals, coal, petroleum and other mineral oils, all forces and sources of potential energy, and other natural resources of the Philippines, and the operation of public utilities, shall, if open to any person, be open to citizens of United states and to all forms of business enterprise owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by the United States citizens.
This provision was indirect contradiction with the 1935 Philippine Constitution which required at least 60 percent Filipino ownership of companies engaged in natural resource-based industries, hence it become necessary to amend the latter. On March 1, 1947, the Constitution was accordingly amended to grant “parity rights” to American citizens as required by the Bell Trade Act.

The Bell Trade Act provided for “free trade” between the Philippine and the United States for eight years. Philippine products could enter the American market without paying any tariff duty for eight years or until July 3, 1954, after which date increasing duty would be imposed yearly so that by January 1, 1973, the full duties would be paid.

Absolute quotas were imposed on sugar, cordage, rice, cigars, tobacco, coconut oil and buttons of pearl or shell, the main Philippine exports before the war. Pre-war manufacturers and producers were to supply the prescribed amounts of these seven products under a system in which quota allocations were granted to them on the basis of their share of the total production that year. This measured restored to prominence those firms which were already dominant before the war. In addition, the quota restriction imposed by the United States, considering that it was the biggest market for these products, substantially reduced the foreign exchange much needed in later years to cover the cost of increasing importation. The quota restriction provided non-tariff protection from American producers and industries, thus violating the free-trade principle which the Trade Act professed to uphold.

There was near unanimous consensus on the adverse consequences for the Philippines of the Bell Trade Act, the only ones taking exception being those who benefitted from this arrangement, namely the manufacturers mostly American operating before the war and the landed interest who were exporting to the US. Shirley Jenkins in a study the Philippine economy published in 1954 during the first five years or immediately following the war concluded that the Bell Trade Act “encouraged the continuation of the pre-war situation in which the Philippine economy suffered from over-specialization and from too great reliance on the American market – conditions not compatible with economic independence.” This judgment was shared by Miguel Cuaderno who observed in 1951 that “the trend of investment and rehabilitation in that period reflected a situation quite similar to that existing before the war. The economy was being restored, not changed; yet a change was called for and had been called for since the early days of the Commonwealth.”

The Bell Trade Act was but one of several factors that defined the contours of the economy, reinforced by the large amount of money that became available immediately after the war in the form of rehabilitation funds from the United States-Philippine reserves stored in the US Treasury during the war. These reserves were returned to the country and used to restart and operate the plants and plantations that had been rendered inoperational during the war. While the desperate situation at the time might have called for such a measure, it certainly did nothing to advance the cause of economic reform.

If the Bell Trade Act is considered the pull-factor, the “rehabilitation” of pre-war export industries is a push-factor in the re-creation of the neo-colonial economy after independence. The country after the war was awash with cash most of which
went to pay large amounts of American consumption goods imported into the country. The highly uneven distribution of income between the small minority of the elite and the numerous poor dictated the kinds of goods that were imported. The 1950's are etched in the minds of many as the good-old days because of the abundance of the fruits of American enterprise. Pio Pedrosa, who succeeded Cuaderno as finance secretary, paints a contemporary picture of the consumerism then rampant among the urban populace:

A few representative items of things we were starved for will suffice to remind everyone of the thing that we have had to buy abroad, after conditions settled down a bit. Our working people were starved for the Piedmont cigarettes that they were smoking before the war; they were starved for the canned sardines and salmon and pineapple that they had come to like very much; and just to complete the picture, they were starved for just simple, plain good rice.

Our middle class people were starved for the apples, grapes and oranges that were part of their daily diet before the war; they were starved for the Chesterfield and Lucky Strike cigarettes that they had missed for four years; they were starved for the five-tube and seven-tube radios with which they made life pleasant during the Commonwealth era; they were starved for phonographs and phonograph records with which they enlivened many a dull evening during the time of peace.

Our moneyed classes were starved for the more expensive things. They were starved for the bacon and ham and Dutch butter which they had enjoyed on their tables before the war; they were starved for the limousines and sedans in which they used to cruise along Dewey Boulevard on warm evenings or on moonlight night; they were starved for the grand pianos and the seven cubic foot refrigerators, the cabinet radio-phonographs, the woolen and Palm Beach clothes, the silk and linen dresses, the nylon stockings, and a hundred other luxuries that were part of their daily life before Pearl Harbor.

Because of this profound and immense starvation, it was natural that as soon as money came into the hands of these different of strata of people again, they began buying heavily all the things that they had been accustomed to, things that they needed and wanted, and things that they enjoyed.

By 1949, the consequences of this profligacy were beginning to show. Production had not yet recovered to pre-war levels and the inherent instability of the prices of the Philippine exports in the world market contributed to the onset of the financial crisis.

In 1949, the volume of a number of major Philippine products as a percentage of pre-war production was as follows: abaca, 69 percent; copra, 110 percent; sugar, 63 percent; cigars, 26 percent; cigarettes, 60 percent. In fiscal 1948-1949, the Cebu Portland Cement company, the only cement company then operating, produced only 3,688,196 bags of cement, while the total requirement was about 6 million. The only textile mill operating in the Philippines, owned and run by the National Development Company produced about 9 million square yards of cloth and 3.6 million pounds of yarn in 1949. Before the war Philippine textile requirements amounted to about 130 million square yards, of which 20 million were made locally and 110 million imported. The population increase raised the
December.

The financial crisis of 1949 was caused in part by the political turbulence occasioned by the Avelino scandal. On November 14, 1949, in recognition of the gravity of the situation, Quirino announced his program of “total economic mobilization”. This was his first official pronouncement after his election in 1949.

All public works were suspended in order to channel all available funds to essential services. This retrenchment measure was necessary because of the uncertainty in public finances. The regular session of congress adjourned without passing a budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1950. Quirino issued executive orders allocating money for all government expenditures from July to November 1949 under his war time emergency powers, but the Supreme Court in September 1949 ruled that the presidential allocations were unconstitutional. The congress was unable to convene in special session until after the November election because of the political squabbles early in the year and because it was election year. Thus during this period there was actually no allocation for government expenditures.

There was large-scale unemployment in the summer of 1950 because of the suspension of public works. The Philippine National Bank stopped accepting Treasury warrants so that school-teachers were not paid their salaries amounting to 56 million pesos. The government, to tide itself over until a budget could be passed for the following year, negotiated a 22 million peso loan from the International Monetary Fund, the first ever loan given by the IMF to the Philippines.

Quirino had signed an import control law on July 26, 1948. This estimated needs to about 170 million square yards.

Recovery of the mining industry which sustained heavy wartime losses was extremely poor. The value of gold production and base metals in 1949 was only a fifth of pre-war production.

The prices in the world market as well as the production of the two main post-war export crops, abaca and copra, declined. Abaca production fell from 110,000 short tons in 1948 to 82,000 in 1949. At the same time prices fell from 68 pesos per picul (139 pounds) in January 1949 to 51.5 pesos in July. The decline in copra was even sharper. Copra exports, which amounted 2.2 million pounds in 1947, were only 1.3 million pounds in 1948, and dropped again in 1.2 million pounds in 1949. The value of these shipments fell from $177.2 million in 1947 to $154.7 million in 1948 and then to the low figure of $89.6 million in 1949.

The balance of trade, which had always been adverse, became very acute in 1949 despite the institution of controls of luxury imports that year. Exports for the calendar year 1949 were 507.6 million pesos, and imports 1,172.8 million.

There was capital flight abroad as a consequence of the loss of confidence in the administration which was aggravated by the imminent fear of the devaluation of the peso. (The value of the peso was pegged to the ratio of two pesos to a dollar by the Bell Trade Act so as to assure American investor in the Philippines of the convertibility of their profits.) The net foreign exchange reserves of the Philippine government and of the Philippine banks fell by nearly half from $410 million on January 1, 1949, to $290 million on October 31, 1949. This declined further by $14.5 million during the first eight days of
was in fulfillment of a recommendation of the Joint Philippine-American Finance Commission. This commission was created to determine whether the budgetary and rehabilitation loans requested by Roxas were needed and to recommend long-range policies with regard to taxes, budgets, the public debt, currency and banking reforms, exchange and trade problems, and reconstruction and development. In its reports for April and June 1947, the Commission recommended that additional loans be granted by the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) to the Philippine government to cover budget deficits. The Commission also outlined what then US Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snyder called “a comprehensive and integrated financial, monetary, fiscal and trade program to achieve economic recovery and development in the Philippines and the establishment of sound governmental policies and practices suited to post-war conditions and the independent status of the Philippine Government.”

The Commission performed its work before Quirino became President but its recommendations took effect during his presidency. It was thus an important determinant of Quirino’s economic policies.

The Commission was really concerned with the recurring budget deficits of the government and the perennial trade deficits. It observed that the flow of foreign exchange would soon be reduced drastically after the American rehabilitation assistance program ceased in 1952. It therefore recommended three main steps for the government to follow: improve the system of revenue collection, restrict imports in order to conserve foreign exchange and expand and intensify production especially of the industries already in existence or in the process of being revived. The steps recommended to implement these, aside from import controls, were increased domestic taxation to reduce the proportion of incomes that might be spent on imports and increased domestic borrowing.

The revenue measures taken were the enactment of a law (signed June 1, 1948) raising tax on luxury goods from twenty percent to thirty percent, and on semi-luxuries from ten percent to fifteen percent. The sales tax was also to be collected from the importer rather than from the retailer to improve tax collection. Foreign exchange allocations were instituted in order to change the character of imports from consumer goods to capital goods.

The first import control law, RA 330, was actually recommended of the 1947 Finance Commission which did its work before Quirino became president. But it was only during Quirino’s term that its recommendations were implemented. Among its recommendations was the enactment of an import control law.

This import control law, RA 330, failed to reverse the trade imbalance because of poor enforcement and because the cuts were not drastic enough. It limited the importation of various commodities to a percentage of either the money value or quantity of the amount imported during the base year July 1, 1947 to June 30 1948. The importation of only those goods classified as luxuries and non-essential goods was regulated. Among the products controlled were automobiles which were cut by 40 percent, perfume by 50 percent, wines and liquors by 50 percent, cigarettes by 30 percent and cotton textile apparel by 40 percent. Twenty percent of import licenses for the controlled items were set aside for new Filipino firms.

In May 1950, as a reaction to the 1949 financial crisis, a new import control law was enacted. This time all imports were
The experience of 1949 served to revive the clamor to amend the Bell Trade Act and the Trade Agreement. During the voting on the Bell Trade Act in the Philippine Congress, there were a few who while eventually voting for its acceptance registered their objection to some of its provisions notably the parity clause and free trade. “Selective free trade”, in the view of some, was a better arrangement to wean the Philippines away from excessive dependence on the American market. The clamor continued after the passage of the Trade Agreement and became louder after the onset of the crisis. Central Bank Governor Miguel Cuaderno in 1951 called for the protection of the Philippine industry, saying that “only the erection of a sound tariff system can offer substantial hope for development of the Philippine economy.” He argued that the protection given by the exchange and imports controls “is uncertain and temporary and has been regarded, at best, as no more than an unsatisfactory substitute for a good tariff structure . . . Windfall gains accrue to merchants without necessarily benefitting either the national treasury or the country as a whole. It is contrary to all tenets of progressive public finance to redistribute Central Bank income in favor of middlemen, and no such step will be taken in the Philippines if it can be prevented.”

The agitation for revision, which came mostly from government officials like Salvador Araneta, was not solely inspired by nationalistic fervor. There was also cause for concern over the termination of the free trade phase of the Trade Agreement in 1954. What the advocates for selective free trade wanted was the extension of free trade in certain goods. In a letter to Eisenhower on March 7, 1953, Quirino requested that the negotiations to revise the Trade Agreement be started soon. He wrote: “I consider the readjustment of our trade relations to be of more immediate concern since by July 4, 1954, the...
Eisenhower’s reply on March 18, 1953, to Quirino suggested that “these proposals be communicated to Ambassador Spruance to facilitate their study by the appropriate authorities of this government in order to determine whether they provide a basis for re-negotiation of the Agreement.” Negotiations were immediately started, but no results were obtained until 1955, two years into the administration of Ramon Magsaysay. On September 6, 1955 to be exact, a revised Trade Agreement was signed by both countries.

The aid program designed by the US in 1946 was coming to an end in 1954. As the Finance Commission had warned in 1947, the sources of finance which caused a lot of money to flow in the first five years or so of the Republic were non-recurring. Unless new sources were founded, the Philippines with its payments and trade deficits would not be able to finance its development plans. Quirino during his 1950 state visit to the United States suggested to Truman that a commission be sent to the Philippines with two main purposes: to make a comprehensive assessment of Philippine economic and financial problems, and then make recommendations regarding the projects which the US could fund. Quirino wanted a joint mission just like the Finance Commission in Roxas’ time. In fact, as soon as he arrived from his trip, he announced the formation of a joint commission and appointed a five-man Philippine group, headed by Jose Yulo, to serve as counterpart of the American group. But the US had other ideas. It wanted a unilateral commission because, according to Truman a “unilateral arrangement would be more conducive to mutual satisfactory results.” Quirino had apparently no choice but to accept Truman’s idea but he sought assurance from Truman that the US government would seek the cooperation of Filipinos concerned about the tariff duties to be imposed by both countries under the Trade Agreement will alter materially and seriously the trade between them.” Thus continued free access to the American market would safeguard the interest of exporters while the government would be able to increase its revenues from import duties - an instance of the use of nationalist rhetoric to further the interest of a group.

The recommendation of the Bell Mission to undertake a review of the Trade Agreement was cited by Quirino in his letter to Eisenhower to justify his proposal for revision. The Bell Mission report reflected the original criticism of the Bell Trade Act emanating from certain section of the American bureaucracy, notably the State and Commerce departments. Their point was that the free trade quota restriction and parity provisions among others would not promote the overall US economic thrust in the post-war period which was to create a global regime of free trade. The argument was that the grant of favored or national status to Americans in the Philippines would, for instance, encourage Great Britain to protect its market in the Commonwealth countries and demand the same preferential status to the detriment of American interest which was seeking entrance into those markets.

President Quirino created a fifteen-man bipartisan committee known as the Montinola Committee after its Chairman Finance Secretary Aurelio Montinola. The members were Secretary of Foreign Affairs J.M Elizalde, Secretary of Commerce and Industry Cornelio Balmaceda, Senator Lorezo Sumulong, Vicente Madrigal, and Francisco Delgado. Representatives Diosdado Macapagal, Daniel Z. Romualdez, and Jose J. Roy, Central Bank Governor Miguel Cuaderno, Salvador Araneta, Conrado Benitez, Vicente G. Sinco, Antonio De las Alas, and Jose P. Melencio.
The Mission, headed by Daniel Bell, former undersecretary of the US treasury and a banker of high repute in Washington, D.C. arrived in the Philippines on July 10, 1950. It was instructed to study Philippine economic and financial problems and to “recommend measures that will enable the Philippines to become and to remain self-supporting.”

The conclusion of the Bell Mission did not differ much from the conclusion of previous missions sent for a similar purpose. It concluded that the difficulties experienced by the Philippines in the past year or so were caused by “the failure to expand production and to increase productive efficiency, which is particularly disappointing because investment was exceptionally high and foreign exchange receipts were exceptionally large during most of the post-liberation period. Too much of the investment went into commerce and real state instead of the development of agriculture and industry; investment undertaken by government corporations had unfortunately proved ineffective. A considerable part of the large foreign exchange receipts was dissipated in imports of luxury and non-essential goods, in the remittance of high profits, and in the transfer of Philippine capital board. The opportunity to increase productive efficiency and to raise the standard of living in the Philippines in the post-war period has thus been wasted because of misdirected investment and excessive imports for consumption. Its recommendation did not much differ from those of the Finance Commission: reform of government finances by raising tax revenues, increasing agricultural production, diversification of industry, improved social services, and government reorganization. The Mission also recommended to the US government that it extend $250 million in loans and grants to carry out a five-year program of economic development and technical assistance.

The recommendations caused a slight ruckus among Philippine officials who had tried as much as possible to implement the recommendations of the Finance Commission to improve public finances. But the Americans were apparently not satisfied with Philippine efforts especially in the area of tax administration. The Finance Commission stressed two main steps to increase government revenues: improving tax collection and redressing the regressive nature of the Philippine tax system by raising direct taxes and reducing indirect taxes as well as imposing new taxes. The Philippine Government was able to undertake most of these measures except the imposition of direct taxes which has always been taboo in the eyes of Philippine government.

Aware of the explosive nature of the Bell Mission’s report, Truman delayed its release by twenty days. On October 25, 1950, a Malacañang statement commenting on the expected criticism of the way US aid was allegedly misused said that Filipinos were “mere pikers compared to their more accomplished eminently successful mentors ” who had “a vast continent on which to base their operations.”

Quirino disclaimed responsibility for statement and apologized to the American ambassador. Although the exact identity of the commentator was never revealed, Quirino fired the acting director of the Philippine Information Council, a Malacañang office, but retained him as a personal secretary, a position he previously held.

Quirino himself said that he was satisfied with the report; its recommendations were made in good faith. He expressed
opposition, however, to the imposition of higher taxes and to American supervision of the $250 million assistance package the US was offering.

The result of all this was the Quirino-Foster Agreement signed on November 14, 1950 to implement the recommendations of the Bell Mission. The Philippines started to put together a legislative program for the purpose including tax legislation designed to raise 565 million pesos for the government. A minimum wage law was signed on April 6, 1951.

Quirino signed on November 14, 1950 an executive agreement with president Truman’s representative, William C. Foster, recommending the implementation of a “program covering the nature and form of assistance and cooperation which the government of United States would extend to the Philippines in the solution of age-old social and economic problems”. The program would be based on the recommendation of the Bell Mission. Much like Today’s Letter of Intent to the IMF, the Memorandum of Agreement listed the steps the Philippine government must undertake in order to avail of US assistance. The Philippine Government, through the Council of State, agreed to pass and implement the following three measures: (1) approval of tax legislation to generate revenues of at least 56.5 million pesos, effective January 1, 1951 “in order to be able to take advantage fully of U.S. aid”; (2) enactment of a minimum wage law covering all agricultural workers and other legislation to raise rural workers incomes; and (3) “a bold resolution expressing the general policy of Congress to accelerate the carrying out of Congressional enactment of the social reform and economic development measures recommended by the Economic Survey Mission to the Philippines.

The United States, for its part, “agrees…to furnish…technical assistance particularly in the field of taxation and revenue collection, social legislation and economic development, to act in an advisory capacity to the appropriate departments or agencies to the Philippine government . . . in consideration of the determination of the Philippine government to act boldly and promptly on the major program . . . the President of the United States intends to recommend to the United States Congress the appropriation of necessary funds . . . envisioned . . . at $250 million.”

The executive agreement also envisioned the creation of a Philippine Council for U.S. aid (PHILCUSA) to represent the Philippines in the assistance and cooperation program. The US would be represented by the Economic Cooperation Administration which would “advise the Philippine government, through the said Philippine council, in planning the use of American social, economic and technical assistance and cooperation, and in advising and assisting the Philippine Government in carrying out the general aims and recommendations of the Economic Survey Mission to the Philippines.” Eleven days later, on November 25, 1950, Quirino created the PHILCUSA as stipulated in the Quirino-Foster agreement.

Again in consonance with the agreement which calls upon the Council of State, “considering that time is of the essence”, to formulate forthwith “a legislative program”, Quirino convened a special congressional session. On March 28, 1951, Quirino signed two new tax laws, RA 600 and 601, which raised the corporate tax from 16 to 20 percent on the first 100,000 pesos of net income and 28 percent thereafter, imposed a 10 percent tax on the net income of private educational institutions, and increased the tax rate of loan and building associations from
third countries, cooperate in the acquisition of facilities and services at reasonable price and in other ways assist the Special Technical and Economic Mission in the performance of its duties.

In 1952, the Philippines received under the program covered by these agreement $32million, and the following year, $30million. The final package that the US was able to assemble was only $77 million, for a total of $139 million, well below the originally envisioned five-year package of $250million.

The Bell Mission and the agreement it gave birth to represented a triumph for the interest in America which had opposed for various reasons the bell trade act. These groups believed that the treaty of friendship, commerce and navigation would suffice to protect American interests in the Philippines, and for that purpose the free trade and Bell Trade Act were a superfluity.

The Bell Mission and the Quirino-Foster agreement provided the key of American control of policy planning in Philippine economic affairs. They provided the legal basis for direct involvement of Americans in government economic planning, overwhelming even the authority of government agencies specifically set up to formulate economic plans such as the national economic council. The assessment of one scholar that the “Bell Report had a tremendous impact on the structuring of post-war economic and public administration.” In the area of public administration for instance this scholar said that “the theoretical and practical aspect of the bell recommendations [were] eventually articulated and enshrined in the revise civil service law of 1959 (RA2260). In line with the recommendations of the Bell Missions, a government survey and reorganization commission was
formed in 1954 during the Magsaysay administration. The US aid program and the US agencies administering this program inaugurated by the Quirino-Foster agreement continue and are still around subsisting as part of the supporting structure of the Philippine-American relations in a new and uncertain era.

Although Quirino handled the foreign affairs portfolio under Roxas, it would be a mistake to assume that an unbroken continuity in foreign policy prevailed from Roxas to Quirino.

In the first place, the presidency of Roxas was too brief to leave its mark on Philippines foreign policy. The Quirino administration could be said, therefore, to have sent the content and style of Philippine participation in world affairs as an independent Republic. Of course, the influence of Roxas’ decisions, whether in foreign policy proper or otherwise, on Quirino’s actions should not be discounted. As in economic policy, Quirino was circumscribed in setting the course of foreign policy by the military and economic treaties Roxas had signed with the United States.

Quirino was painfully aware of the irony of having US bases in a supposedly sovereign country. Thus he wrote in his memoirs, partly in justification of his role in the negotiations for the bases treaty:

In 1947, we were pressed for so many needs in our national housekeeping which the United States alone was in a position to provide. A sense of realism obliged us to heed the wisdom of accommodation in relation to matters where time in due course should develop in us the knowledge, character and ability to correct existing disproportions inconsistent with national sovereignty and dignity. Posterity could understand our acceptance in 1947, for example, of 99 years as the term of lease for the bases, which less than a decade of the revolutionary progress of nuclear science has made patently questionable.

Quirino thus appears to accept the view that domestic policy determines a country’s foreign relations. The preponderant American influence in Philippine domestic affairs, especially in the sphere of economic policy, would naturally manifest itself in foreign relations as well.

At the same time, Quirino thought that the situation was not all the bad, thanks to the “considerable self-abnegation” exercised by the United States:

We must admit that in agreeing as much as she did finally to the terms as concluded, the United States appeared to have exercised considerable self-abnegation. This could not have been simple to a power habituated to the acceptance of her wishes by reason of an overpowering sense of their rightness and of her own righteousness.

Quirino also recounted in his memoirs that during the negotiations for the military bases treaty, the Philippines was able to resist American pressure such that the actual number of bases the Americans eventually got was less than what they wanted. Nor were they able to get the bases in Manila which they had sought.

Quirino thought that hosting United States bases involved only a slight diminution of sovereignty since the United States “was properly acknowledge as democracy’s arsenal and food-bowl.”
Quirino wrote that in nations as in human being there are “habits” that “take time to change.” Quirino begged the indulgence of the world community, which had been considerably enlarged by the declaration of independence of many colonies immediately after the second World War, and of the Filipino people. He reminded them:

Just as we would need prolonged understanding for our inability to shake and shed off subservience bred of long colonial domination, we would also need to take charitably the American disinclination and difficulty to realize that the Philippines cannot indefinitely remain a special U.S. preserve and protectorate in cavalier disregard of national sensibilities.

In a moving appeal, he invoked the authority and nationalism of Quezon:

There was no question that with those two agreements signed, our people in 1947 felt immensely reinforced in their faith that our national safety rested on a secure foundation. We could, I thought, face our future and its ups and downs with a kind of security and confidence that was quite important.

What led to the bases and military assistance – as an imperative of security – had not been a neat, consistent line. What deviations it had seen came of a realism required by a courageous assessment of a changing situation.

I was on the side of Manuel Quezon when he rejected the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act that Osmeña and Roxas had labored so hard to get in 1933, because the measure would reserve military and naval bases to the United States after independence. To Quezon, the retention of bases “destroyed the very essence of independent existence of the Philippines.” Only too true.

Even President Roosevelt agreed, convinced by Quezon, “that the maintenance of military reservations in the Philippines after the proclamation of the Philippine Republic would, in itself, make the granting of independence a farce.

As it came out, the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 which Quezon got in substitution was practically identical with the rejected Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act, except for the provision about naval reservations and fueling stations that would be subject to negotiations after the grant of independence.

Ten years later, in June 1944, Quezon remembering the rape and occupation of the Philippines during the Pacific war, formally consented with Roosevelt in accepting the U.S. Congress concurrent resolution authorizing the U.S. President to acquire bases for the mutual protection of the Philippines and the United States.

The US interest in maintaining the Asian-Pacific region, however, as its “sphere of influence” necessitated that economic agreements negotiated with it be tied, albeit indirectly, to security considerations. Thus the Philippines continued to rely on the Americans for its basic needs. An agreement extending for three years the Military Assistance Agreement of 1947 was signed on March 11, 1950. The Mutual Defense Act which was signed almost simultaneously with the Japanese Peace Treaty in San Francisco provided new military assistance to the Philippines.

Apart from the diminution of Philippine sovereignty which
the military bases and US military assistance represented, American influence was most noticeable in economic affairs. The Bell Mission became the occasion for the permanent assignment of American advisers in the Philippines to monitor the way Filipinos managed the national economy. Philippine-American relations in Quirino’s time mainly involved economic matters and Philippine foreign relations were in a vital sense very much United States centered. In Quirino’s own words: “We had to hew close to the U.S. line in our relations with the outside world.”

Quirino tried to soften this awkward posture somewhat by pursuing an “Asian” foreign policy. An inveterate traveler who went on a world trip, mostly around Europe while he was Vice-President, Quirino also proved to be an indefatigable organizer of and participant in international conferences which attempted to establish a regional organization of Asian states similar to the Organization of American States. These were the New Delhi and the Baguio conferences.

The New Delhi Conference held January 22 to 25, 1949, was organized by Prime Minister Nehru of India to consider the question of Indonesian independence. The Philippine representative to this conference was Carlos P. Romulo, then Permanent Representative the United Nations. In this conference, the Philippines tried to push for the creation of a permanent secretariat as a step in the organization of a permanent organization of Asian states. This proposal failed to prosper mainly because of the suspicion of Asian countries, particularly India of the overt pro Americanism of the Philippine representative. The conference opted instead for informal consultations with no specified schedules.

A year after the New Delhi conference, the Philippines hosted on May 26 to 30, 1950, the Southeast Asia Union Conference in Baguio. Attended by Pakistan, Thailand, India, Ceylon, Australia and the newly-independent United States of Indonesia, the conference was a progenitor of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The conference adopted a resolution which authorizes its President (Carlos P. Romulo who had by then become Quirino’s Secretary of Foreign Affairs) to communicate the recommendations of the Conference to the participating Governments for their consideration and to keep them informed of the progress in relation to these recommendations.

The Philippines had entered the conference determined to produce a consensus for a solid Asian regional organization. The only resolution adopted at the conference called for the undertaking of common measures to promote commercial and financial relations and to unite efforts towards cultural progress and social well-being among the participating nations. Despite the lack of concrete results, Romulo hailed the conference a great success.

There was ambivalence in these attempts of Quirino to forge an Asia-oriented foreign policy along the lines of the Pacific Union proposal which might be considered the most distinctive feature of his foreign policy. It is thus understandable why Quirino exerted a great deal of effort to bring his idea to fruition.

Quirino first broached the idea of forming a Pacific Union to Truman in his first state visit in the early part of his presidency, from August 6 to 18, 1949. (Incidentally, Quirino inaugurated the practice followed by subsequent presidents to undertake a formal visit to the American capital at the start of their presidency.)
Quirino tried to sell his idea of a Pacific Union to the United States by saying that he was “thinking in terms of collective security and regional defense arrangements.” When talking to Asian states, however, Quirino emphasized the non-military character of the proposed union. The Pacific Union, in this sense, was the answer to the need for “a common defense against further communist penetration of the democratic area by economic and political cooperation.” President Truman was lukewarm to the idea.

The United States, however, picked up the idea a few years later when it spearheaded the formation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) as the Asian counterpart of the European NATO. When Quirino first proposed the Pacific Union, the United States had not yet formed a clear and consistent strategy in or towards the Asian region. In the intervening years, however, the region was shaken by a succession of momentous events. Historic triumph of Mao Tse-tung’s revolutionary forces in China in 1949 was followed by the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950. In response to these events, the United States formulated its strategy of containment. The domino principle became the main ingredient in such a strategy which clearly implied the need for a military alliance in the region.

The Pacific Union proposal was hobbled by a basic problem of geography. What geographic region was it intended to cover? One moment it was “Asia”, then the “Far East”, then the “Pacific Basin Countries”, and finally, “the Nations of Southeast Asia”. The Philippines’ ambivalent attitude toward the Associated States of Indo-China – Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia – which was a curious policy of half-recognition because of their communist orientation, and toward Indonesia, which was pushing for a neutralist stance in the developing Cold War, tended to restrict the membership of the proposed union.

There was confusion as well regarding the ideological orientation of the union, whether it would be anti-communist, and whether or not it would be a military alliance. These confusions in the concept of a Pacific Union perhaps best explain why it never came into being.

The NATO model in Europe and the OAS model in Latin America were of little help to countries of a region where the links of a common language, religion, culture, economic and political system were non-existent.

As a result of the Philippines’ active participation in the New Delhi Conference as well as in the deliberations on the Indonesian question in the United Nations, the Philippines was honored with a seven-day state visit in January 1951 by Sukarno, President of the United States of Indonesia which had proclaimed its independence on December 27, 1949. Quirino reciprocated a year later, in July 1952, with an eleven-day visit. Quirino as President also travelled to Spain where he was magnificently received by Generalissimo Franco. His daughter Vicky, who in the role of First Lady had earlier visited Spain and other European countries as an ambassador of goodwill, accompanied him.

A more marked anti-communist stance in foreign policy, hitherto absent or at least toned down, became more evident during the second part of Quirino’s presidency, after his election in late 1949. Before the election, Quirino had played host to Chiang Kai-shek in Mansion House in Baguio
on July 10 and 11 during which the idea of a Pacific Union was among the topics discussed. At this period, the non-military character of the proposed union was emphasized. Only later did the military aspect come into the picture as a result of domestic and international developments. The defeat of the Kuomintang later that year and the exile of Chiang’s government to Taiwan, the turbulence in Indochina, particularly in Vietnam where the movement led by Ho Chi Minh defeated the French colonial forces in Dien Bien Phu in 1954, the insurgency in Malaya and the strength of the Communist Party in Indonesia, the proclamation of the People’s Republic of North Korea – all these gave the impression of an international communist movement on the march and about to engulf the Philippines. The fact that the Hukbalahap and the Philippine communists were resurgent magnified these fears of the Quirino administration a hundredfold. The economic crisis of 1949 certainly eroded the confidence of the administration. Its anti-communist outlook concrete shape in the sending of the Philippine Expeditionary Forces to Korea (PEFTOK), a rotating contingent of about 1200 officers and men each time from 1950 until the signing on July 27,1953, of the Treaty of Panmunjom ending the war and partitioning Korea along the 27th parallel.

The Philippines refused to recognize Mao Tse-tung’s government after it had overcome Chiang’s forces. The Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations at the time of Quirino regime had not extended recognition to the Philippine Republic.

The other major foreign policy matter which preoccupied the Quirino Administration was the normalization of relations with Japan. The major remaining issue were reparations and the complete demilitarization of Japan. In the reparations negotiations, the Philippines asked for a total of $8 billion which not a single cent was received by the Philippines by the end of the Quirino regime. As for the demilitarization of Japan, the Philippines had to content itself with the provisions of the Peace Treaty formulated in San Francisco in 1951 which fell short of the safeguards demanded by the Philippines to prevent the resurgence of militarism and fascism in Japan. The Philippines signed the treaty which however was not ratified by the Senate thus keeping the Philippines still technically at war with Japan. In the meantime, however, trade relations with Japan were carried on under the terms of agreement signed on May 18, 1950, and revised in March the following year. The revised agreement regulated a trade intercourse worth up to $50 million in both directions. The composition of the exports of the Philippines as compared to those of Japan is quite revealing about the then predominantly agricultural character of the Philippine economy and the thrust of Japan’s industrial power which despite the tremendous destruction of the war it was able to preserve. The Philippines has maintained its status as a raw materials supplier to Japan to this day.

In the first decade after independence, Manila took prudent advantage of the opportunity to maintain independent diplomatic intercourse with outside world. Legations were opened in London, Paris and Rome during the Quirino administration. Treaties of Friendship were signed with Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Greece, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand and Turkey. To carry out these expanded diplomatic relations, an adequate foreign service corps was established by the Foreign Service Act (RA708) approved by Congress on June 5, 1952. A permanent mission headed by Bernabe Africa left for Japan on October 19, 1948.

Quirino was his own foreign affairs secretary for more than
one year, from October 1948 to May 1950. He was succeeded by Carlos P. Romulo who was secretary until December, 1951. Felino Neri became caretaker secretary in the interim period until Joaquin Elizalde, who was earlier permanent representative to the UN and ambassador to the United States, took over. It was during the Quirino’s time that the star of Carlos P. Romulo as diplomat began to rise following his election as President of the fourth annual session of the United Nations General Assembly. Later, Romulo’s unsuccessful bid of election as UN Secretary-General induced him to turn his steps to the unfamiliar arena of Philippines politics. In the 1953 presidential elections he ran against Quirino but later withdrew in favor of Magsaysay.

Philippine society was prostrate at the end of World War II. The economy was a shambles. The poor though poorer still were somehow surviving – with an indomitable will. And the privileged class desperately wanted to retrieve their properties and wealth as rapidly as possible.

Filipinos might seem ecstatic over their “liberation”. But three years of Japanese occupation had failed to arouse a genuine anti-colonial consciousness among people who had been colonized for three centuries by Spain and less than half a century by the United States. An independent Philippines would serve as a useful conduit for America’s neo-colonial enterprises. A byzantine bureaucracy was established, so massive that central monitoring proved difficult if not impossible, yet so effective as an instrument of political power that the elite were able to reestablish their primacy as members of a privileged class.

Thus, during the administration of President Sergio Osmeña, graft and corruption had provided certain sectors of Filipino
society opportunities to increase their purchasing power. Surplus income which could have been utilized to fuel various production activities was instead recklessly wasted on a variety of showy status symbols by high government officials, the elite and nouveau riche: palatial mansions, expensive cars, and imported luxury items. The addiction to luxury intensified the growth of related and usually unnecessary activities, such as gambling and other vices of profligate living.

As early as 1947, when Quirino was on a goodwill visit to the United States as Vice-President of the Philippines and Secretary of Foreign Affairs, an editorial of Evening News Service (13 May 1947) in Washington commented on a Manila report by Spencer Davis, a US press representative in the Philippines:

It is said that UNRRA supplies have been sold by the government with its knowledge to black marketers in the islands and abroad. That war surplus materials given for the rehabilitation of the Philippines have been sold to China and other countries at big profits. And that government officials with their pockets lined with cash from this nefarious traffic are building new houses for themselves much beyond their government means.

An orgy of spending became a national habit and a highlight of the Quirino administration. And as Quirino himself would recall, “it was not secret that among the most vociferous of those denouncing graft and corruption in the government were some prominently known leaders during the Japanese regime”. When Quirino decided to grant back pay to all government employees before the war, these known national leaders were also included in the bounty although they have collected their salaries while serving the Japanese occupation government. Jewelry confiscated by SCAP in Tokyo which belongs to the wives of occupation materials who had sought refuge in Japan were returned to their rightful owners through Quirino’s intercession.

The existence, though not the extent of close collaboration between the ruling elite, government officials and the press has always been widely accepted. During the Quirino administration, some working newspaper reporters were known to be on the payroll of certain government offices. The Manila Bulletin (15 May 1948), for instance, admitted that it was a common practice for a reporter covering Congress, an executive department or bureau to have a side job in one of these as public relations officer for which he was paid a regular stipend in addition to what his newspaper paid him. The practice was widely rationalized, if not justified by the notoriously low salaries they got as reporters.

Particularly aggravating the Quirino government were the irregularities that were plaguing the Surplus Property Commission. The commission had no inventory of the US Army surplus property which had been turned over to the Philippine Government at the end of war. Scattered all over the archipelago, they had been appraised roughly in terms of their bulk or weight. Unscrupulous persons took advantage of a situation which aroused the worst instincts of the freebooters. They somehow got hold of these products which they eventually appropriated for themselves. Thus, the piers and port areas choking with enormous quantities of surplus property were quickly cleared, but not before a number of the astute operators were able to obtain exclusive rights to “salvage” the American “junk” at nominal, give-away prices.

Quirino would later recall that “the prospect of big profit in disposal of these goods a spirit characteristic of the moral
Property Commission was brought to court in connection with the transaction in which Lt. Col. Hernando J.C. Corvera, military aide to President Roxas, was involved with Leonardo Manas, a Manila businessman and two Chinese businessmen.

In another case, Base M in San Fernando, La Union had reported a loss of 1 million pesos. The purchasing party which had won the bid for the whole base agreed to pay a certain percentage of the acquisition cost of the supplies stored in the base. The Surplus Property Commission was expected to have received 2 million pesos from the sale. Instead, the commission only received 329,000 pesos from the purchaser and an estimate of the proceeds from the sale of the rest of the goods amounted only 30,000 pesos. Proceeds from the deliveries not yet paid was expected to yield another 10,000 pesos. A Chinese merchant was alleged to have made a bid of 1,500,000 pesos for the whole sale. Blamed was placed upon the officials of the commission for the rejection of the bid in the expectation of earning an additional half a million pesos. It was likewise noted that the government lacked knowledge of what the base contained and failed to evaluate the goods stored in most of the depots.

Another fraudulent project invoked a proposed sale of 70 tractors for an extremely low price of 11,000 pesos. The procurement of these tractors had actually cost the government 1,000,000 pesos. The tractors were located at Base K, Tacloban, Leyte and reported to have been deliberately burned so as to justify their classification as salvage or scrap. The sale of 200,000 blasting caps of Joseph Arcache, a well known businessman, was another surplus scandal. The blasting caps were released to Arcache upon presentation of an explosives license. The deputy chief of staff explained that sale had been referred to the chief of staff who approved it.
President Quirino created a committee to look into the actual conditions obtaining in the Surplus Commission. The committee was composed of Justice Antonio Horilleno, former member of the Supreme Court, chairman, and Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue Alfredo Jacinto and Deputy Auditor General Pio Joven, members. Even while Quirino was waiting for the final written report of the surplus investigation committee, another controversy arose. Senator Fernando Lopez demanded investigation of Immigration Commissioner Engracio Fabre. Commission Fabre had met Senator Lopez at the Malacañang palace and informed him that he had already released his immigration quota allocation. The Senator considered this as an insult.

The press had sensationalized reports that senators and congressmen guaranteeing safe conduct of prospective Chinese immigrants had been receiving fees for the favor. The law only allowed 500 Chinese (who satisfied all legal requirements) to enter the country each year. The task of screening these immigrants was assigned to the immigration office which had allowed members congress to make a guarantee for each entry. Congressman Ramon Magsaysay of Zambales revealed that certain members of Congress were indeed dragged into the immigration office: “About the middle of 1947, I was approached by an individual who mentioned to me ‘immigration quotas’ for congressmen. The individual informed me that several aliens had been allocated to me and that 18,000 pesos would be mine if I would just affix my signature to a letter which he prepared for me addressed to Commissioner Fabre.”

Another scandal which rocked the Quirino administration involved the distribution of streptomycin, then a newly discovered wonder drug for tubercular patients. The government was reported to have sold this drug at a high price. Private dealers could not import the medicine in quantities because the government had appropriated the entire allocation for the entire country. Certain government officials were reported to have made exorbitant profits through the control of the sale and distribution of the drug. Quirino ordered the Secretary of Public Health, Dr. Antonio Villarama to explain the charges against the government. Villarama said that the government was only charging one centavo more per vial above cost, and that the net proceeds which amounted to 400,000 pesos had been intended for the construction of a hospital. In addition, he insisted that the government had a duty to break the black market on the drug that had arisen. He reported that while the government sold the drug at 11.24 pesos per vial, or one centavo over landed cost, private dealers were selling it at prices ranging from 25 pesos to 35 pesos per vial. Since the government could purchase that drug at a lower price, Quirino ordered that drug to be sold at 6 pesos per vial and announced that all private firms could order the drug direct from the United States at no more than 200 pesos per order in accordance with existing regulations. This development threatened to involve the diplomatic status of the Philippine Embassy in Washington through which agreements with the American manufacturers on behalf of the local buyers had been made.

In another incident, President Quirino was obliged to request Maximo M. Kalaw, manager of NACOCO (National Coconut Corporation) to submit a report on its operations. Kalaw’s request for a loan of 5,000,000 pesos from the Philippine National Bank to carry on the trading activities of the company and to prop up its credit facilities had been denied. Kalaw’s report showed a loss of over 3,000,000 pesos in its operation
A controversy had also developed at the Senate over the assignment of Senator Vicente J. Francisco to the Palestine Commission of the United Nations after he had complained that the per diem that he was receiving was not sufficient to cover his expenses in New York City. In a series of articles he wrote for the local press, Francisco leveled charges of corruption against certain high government officials. He blamed the President of the Senate, Jose Avelino, for maneuvering to get him out of the Senate Code Committee to which he was assigned as chairman. He was alleged to have been making improper demands and was therefore denied the right to be the chairman of the committee. A letter he had written to President Roxas was published and used to oust him from the floor leadership. In the letter, the senator asked Roxas for the payment of his per diems as delegate to the Palestine Commission.

The publication of this letter angered him. A telephone conversation he had with Senator Fernando Lopez on 19 April in New York after the death of Roxas, was also published. The senator was reported to have said that Avelino would probably run for President and win “because I am certain that he has been shrewdly building a political machine for a long time and has placed many of his political henchmen in strategic government posts all over our country”. Francisco averred that the election of Senator Avelino as President of the Philippines would be a national disaster which the “Filipino people would suffer to the utmost in having to endure the most corrupt government in the Philippine history”. The publication of Francisco’s letter to Roxas and his controversy with Senate President Avelino had created a public reaction against him.

To Quirino it must have seemed odd that when Avelino was for which he blamed the bank. The bank, he charged, had failed to extend the much needed credit for its copra trading activities. He also blamed the competition offered by two US government entities, one purchasing copra for SCAP and the other for the Marshall plan in Europe. These two agencies, Kalaw claimed, made bids for copra with dollars in the United States while they bought the copra with pesos in the Philippines. Their dollar operations enabled them to trade liberally in the Philippines thus placing NACOCO in a losing position. A civil suit to recover damages from Kalaw, together with Juan Bocar, Casimiro Garcia and Mrs. Leonor Moll, members of NACOCO board, was filed in court. Kalaw was suspended and the board members replaced. Two hundred employees of the NACOCO were laid off as a result.

Another press scandal was provoked by the accusation that the benefits to veterans and their heirs were not reaching the legitimate claimants because some army officers, their wives and the local postmasters intervened. It was reported that the amount of 94,000,000 transferred by the US army to the Philippines to pay the claims of the veterans and their heirs never reached the lawful beneficiaries.

On 19 May, representatives of the National Federation of Tenants Associations of the Philippines, headed by Jeremias Jimenez, and of the League of Tenants Associations, headed by Francisco S. Navarro, called on Quirino in Malacañang to demand the resignation of Roman Ozaeta, Secretary of Justice and Faustino Aguilar, manager of the Rural Progress Association. These associations claimed that both officials failed to show interest in the tenants’ welfare. They reminded Quirino that President Roxas had promised to expropriate certain estates for distribution among the tenants and that the two officials had done nothing to fulfill the pledge.

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deposed from the Senate Presidency on the strength of charges involving various anomalies he had committed in dealing with the surplus properties, Senator Francisco stood firmly on Avelino's side. In fact, when Avelino left the party to seek Presidency in 1949, Senator Francisco was his running mate as candidate for vice-president. On account of these anomalies, the issue of graft and corruption in government exploded, as it were, before a public used to regarding the State as the exemplar of high moral standards.

The corruption, as has been pointed out, did not start with the Quirino Government. Actually what was ultimately exposed during the Quirino administration was the accretion of nefarious activities within the government which had been which had been going on for some time, starting with the administration of Osmeña, or soon after the Commonwealth was reestablished.

The decay of moral values as a result of the deprivation in the war years created an indulgent milieu for the commission of corrupt practices by government officials and the influential elite through the misuse of the state power.

This was made possible by structural defects in the system which became compounded as the bureaucracy expanded under the post World War II dispensation. Some of those corrupt practices were actually legal, although in the context in which they were legitimized, they constituted immoral behavior. The passage of the back pay law, for instance, passed by Congress during the Osmeña regime and opposed by Osmeña himself, was one such instance. The law was devised by a group determined to win public support for the political campaign against the incumbent Chief Executive.
THE PRESIDENT
Elpidio Quirino was sworn as President immediately after Pres. Roxas’ death. Witnessing the event were Prospero Sanidad, Tommy Quirino, Hermie Atienza, Petronila Mendoza, Vicky Quirino, Helen Bennet, Sec. Jose Zulueta.
Press Secretary Antonio Arizabal with the President visit sick soldiers at the Veteran’s Hospital.

Elpidio Quirino signs the Rogers Act Agreement attended by several delegations for the repatriation of Japanese POWs.

With an Amnesty Proclamation Huk Supremo Luis Taruc returned to the fold of the law in 1948. Photo shows him with President Quirino and Gen. Mariano Castañeda in Malacañang.

The First Council of State Meeting — (Left to right) Jose Yulo, Mariano Garchitorena, Speaker Eugenio Perez, Chief of Justice Ricardo Paras, Elpidio Quirino, Jose Zulueta, Manuel Gallego, Emilio Abello.

Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo and Sen. Francisco Delgado were members of the committee created by Pres. Quirino to investigate the Maria Cristina Hydro-electric plant in June 8, 1950.
In Lanao with (front row) Hadji Buto, Gen. Mariano Castañeda, Prospero Sanidad, and Abraham Rasul.

An inspection trip to Bukidnon with Sec. Sotero Baluyut, and Mercedes Ozamis Fortich, March 4, 1952.

Cong. Ali Dimaporo, Elpidio Quirino, Sec. Ramon Magsaysay, Jose Yulo, Col. Jose P. Cardenas during a provincial trip to Mindanao.

Elpidio Quirinbo in Abra, February 1949.
Elpidio Quirino with Agriculture Secretary Salvador Araneta talking to a sari-sari store owner in Koronadal Valley.

Elpidio Quirino addressing a big crowd in Gapan, Nueva Ecija, October 17, 1949.

Elpidio Quirino with settlers of Koronadal Valley, Mindanao.
President Elpidio Quirino talks to Mrs. Carmen Polo Franco and Generalísimo Francisco Franco during a state visit to Spain on October, 1951. With him were daughter Vicky and Chito Gonzalez.

President Elpidio Quirino and U.S. President Harry Truman watched Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Carlos P. Romulo sign the US Defense Pact for their respective countries.
Pope Pius XII received Vicky, President Elpidio Quirino, Amb. Manuel Moran, Jose Yulo, Nenita Moran Garcia and their group during their visit to the Vatican.

President Elpidio Quirino waves to well-wishers during his state visit to Indonesia. He was met by Indonesian Pres. Sukarno and Vice President Mohammed Hatta.

President Elpidio Quirino plays host to Generalismo Chiang Kai-shek in Baguio.

Italian Pres. Einaudi welcomes President Elpidio Quirino when he made a state visit to Italy.
From his sickbed, at the Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Md., USA, President Elpidio Quirino read his state of the nation address.

During his retirement, frequent guests at his Novaliches home were neighbors accompanied here by Quezon City Mayor Ignacio Santos Diaz.

Elpidio Quirino addressing a big crowd during 1953 campaign.

The last picture taken of Elpidio Quirino with Chito Gonzalez, Dindo Gonzalez, Vicky Gonzalez and Ramon Magsaysay, Feb. 25, 1956.
Elpidio Quirino lying in state at the Malacañang Ceremonial Hall. Among those who paid their last respects and condoled with Vicky were Luz Magsaysay, Mrs. Trining Roxas, Leonila Garcia, and Vice President Carlos P. Garcia.
Although adopted during the Osmeña administration, the law would be binding upon the ensuing of the administrations. With much reluctance, Quirino had to comply with the law, even if it meant, as he remarked ironically, the payment of back compensation for collaborators and the return of the confiscated jewelry to their wives.

Other instances of corruption unearthed during the Quirino administration relate to the problem of structural defects in bureaucracy which allowed certain officials to have a “turf” or sphere of influence within large sections of civil service. The over-centralization of responsibilities of these areas allowed officials to control large-scale transactions.

* * *

When Quirino assumed the presidency, the prevalence of graft and corruption was by no means the only problem besiegling the national leadership. In point of fact, the rebellion in Central Luzon proved to be the most pressing problem of the Republic. On 29 April, with few military escorts and bodyguards, Quirino made a surprise visit to the Huk infested provinces of Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Pampanga and Bulacan. Everywhere he went the Presidential flag fluttered from his car’s radiator.

While the surprise visit to Huklandia shocked the nation, it was hailed by many as a wise gesture of peace. Congress and other government officials supported Quirino’s move and commended the idea of unconditional amnesty. The press endorsed it. And Quirino was well aware of the popular trend.

Shortly after his sensationalized visit to Huklandia, Quirino received a personal letter from Huk leader Luis M. Taruc, sent through an intermediary, offering his cooperation and that of his comrades with a new administration. Taruc declared that he would be prepared to discuss with a presidential representative the conditions of cooperative action to promote peace and order in Central Luzon. On 5 May, Quirino sent his younger brother Judge Antonio Quirino, as an emissary to confer with Taruc somewhere in the field.

After round of secret meetings between the government emissary and the rebels, Taruc wrote a letter dated 1 June 1948 to Judge Quirino. The letter contained a summary of the tentative agreements reached: the amnesty proclamation would not contain such words as “surrender”, “technical arrest” or “custody”; and the President would “issue a supplementary executive order which will make the amnesty full and unconditional and which will remove all imputations of guilt from the Huk and PKM organizations”.

In his letter to Judge Quirino, Taruc referred to a tacit understanding regarding the Huk surrender of their firearms as a “non-negotiable” matter. He reminded Quirino of their agreement that President Quirino was not bound by previous commitments of the Roxas government and therefore work towards the eradication of the Bell Trade Act and the Military Bases Agreement. It was also agreed that President Quirino would eliminate graft and corruption, encourage the democratic process and institute a land reform program.

On 21 June, Quirino proclaimed amnesty for the Huk and the PKM organizations, followed by the surrender of Luis M. Taruc and even of his officers as an earnest of their adherence to the conditions of the amnesty. A few days later, Congress concurred on the proclamation. It likewise clarified that amnesty would cover not only rebellion, sedition, illegal association, assault upon, resistance and disobedience to
articulating his interest the peasant unrest in Central Luzon, Quirino accepted on 11 July Taruc’s invitation to speak at the Huk rally at San Roque, Hinukay, Baliuag, Bulacan, at the heart of Huklandia which no government official have never dared to penetrate. Quirino spoke to the mammoth crowd about his program of social amelioration aimed at liberating the peasantry from poverty and misery.

On 22 July 1948, Quirino called a meeting of peasant representatives, including Congressman Taruc, and Judge Jesus Barrera, a representative of Civil Liberties Union to draft a comprehensive program of social amelioration. The cabinet unanimously endorsed the program which was built on a “six point approach to social amelioration”: 1) agricultural aspect: acquisition and redistribution of landed estates, opening of new lands, furnishing of seedlings, tools and animals; 2) public works aspect: building and repair of roads, bridges, etc. to provide employment; 3) educational aspect: opening of extension classes for dissidents’ children, vocational training, adult education; 4) financial aspect: cooperative and home-building loans from the Philippine National Bank; 5) relief aspect: distribution of food, clothing, etc. by the Welfare Commission; 6) medical aspect: reactivation of mobile clinics.

The promises, however, which Judge Quirino made were not realized. Constabulary units and civilian guards continued their raid and ambushes. Some military personnel regarded the registration of firearms as a systematic method of identifying the Huk’s and PKMs for eventual harassment, if not assassination. Moreover, the social amelioration program of the Government failed to redistribute the vast estates of the landed gentry to the landless peasantry. And so on 15 August, the Huk leaders went underground once more, frustrated by what they regarded as the insincerity of the persons in authority, and/or illegal possession of firearms and but also all common crimes save those against chastity.

The amnesty, however, applied only those who “presented themselves with all their arms and ammunition to the duly constituted authorities” within twenty days from the date the proclamation was sanctioned by Congress.

The amnesty proclamation was ambiguous. Not only did it fail to categorically specify the demand of the Huks’ surrender of firearms; it was likewise unclear about the life and status of the Huks upon surrendering their firearms. Nonetheless, Taruc and the other negotiators proceeded to Manila to clarify matters with President Quirino himself. Taruc was allowed to take a seat in Congress and to collect his back salary for two years. For the duration of the amnesty period and its extension to 15 August, Taruc had the cooperation of all government departments concerned, including provincial and municipal offices to facilitate the immediate return of his comrades to a life of peace. And Quirino would recall how he lost no time “in restoring idle ricelands to cultivation and distributing palay seeds where needed. Congress gave me 4 million pesos to help all displaced persons, law abiding and repentant dissidents alike. Estimates of Huks and PKMs at that time ranged from 300,000 to 400,000. The Welfare Commission was prepared to provide needed food, clothing, medicine”.

A week following the amnesty proclamation, Taruc made his first radio broadcast. He stressed that the key to the existing problems of the peasantry was not in the surrender of their firearms but in the “quick and radical adoption of social and economic reforms to remove basic causes of poverty and thus remove the reason for resorting to arms”. As a gesture
Quirino administration.

In a democratic peace rally held in Manila on 29 August, Taruc, who was supposed to be a speaker failed to attend and sent instead an “Open Letter to the Filipino People”. In that letter, Taruc declared that “the peace efforts have failed not because of us, but because President Quirino and his administration have failed to live up to their commitments … they have failed to abide by the conditions necessary for democratic peace. President Quirino has failed to define his stand in Wallace plank advocating the abrogation of the Bell Trade Act and the removal of the US troops and bases from our soil. He has decided to continue trade with Japan imposed by SCAP, despite the overwhelming opposition of the great majority of the people”. At the end of the amnesty period, some 50,000 Huks and PKMs were reported to have registered. But only negligible quantity of arms was surrendered. Top leaders who took advantage of the amnesty with Taruc included only Pedro Villegas, over-all Huk commander for Southern Luzon, and Jose Dimasalong de Leon of Nueva Ecija.

The PKP then proclaimed armed struggle and seizure of power as the only means to achieve their goals. An expansion program was then worked out and the name of Hukbalahap was change to Hukbong Magpapalaya ng Bayan (HMB), or People’s Liberation Army.

President Quirino would later recall that when he went to Pampanga to talk to the leaders of the Huk rebellion, he made his position crystal clear: for the amnesty to be effective, the Huks must first surrender their arms. Unless this was done, the State would have no option but to fight them and crush the rebellion.

“Looking back,” he said, “I believe that amnesty was a moral victory for the government. Now the people knew the character of the Huk dissidence and could understand the measures employed to curb it, and cooperate accordingly. However the Huks might camouflage it, they were essentially after absolute and forcible domination, not for peace, freedom or justice as they claimed.”

Quirino had never realized that the political storm raised by the announcement of his candidacy would lead the national leadership to an endless fight over a variety of issues such as graft and corruption in the government involving surplus property deals, Chinese immigration quotas, etc. As the successor of the departed leader, President Roxas, Quirino expected the full support of his party. Ironically, however, it was his search for the support of his party which almost immediately provoked “public controversy, the most unfortunate thing that could happen to the office of the President”.

Quirino’s quest for support “with which to complete Roxas’ unfinished term” quickly proved to be sorely disappointing. Senator Jose Avelino, head of the party, decided to follow his own counsel. His speech at the bahay kubo wrecked the first meeting of the party’s ruling party which was expected to further the cause of harmony and understanding. In a speech destined to become notorious, Avelino upheld graft and corruption as a proper norm for any public official in power. As if to document oft-repeated charges of widespread graft and corruption in government, the press reproduced the Avelino speech in full, with its stark and unashamed defense of amorality in politics. Addressing President Quirino directly, he said:

“Why did you have to order an investigation, honorable
Mr. President? If you cannot permit abuses, you must at least tolerate them. What are we in power for? We are not hypocrites. Why should we pretend to be saints when in reality we are not? We are not angels. And besides, when we die we all go to hell. Anyway, it is preferable to go to hell where there are no investigation, no Secretary of Justice, no Secretary of Interior to go after us.”

Avelino’s subsequent ouster as President of the Senate and the prolonged investigations of the charges against him disrupted the work of Congress and produced repercussions which rocked the government and spoiled the remaining unfinished term of President Roxas.

The opposition had a holiday trying to take full advantage of the gaping hole in the ranks of the Liberal Party. The Liberal Senators who did not follow Avelino in his revolt had to make temporary alliances with their Nacionalista colleagues to maintain control of the Senate. Under the entente cordiale arrived at between these two groups, the Senate proceeded to conduct the probes against Avelino and the other senators facing charges. Towards the end of the investigations, it became clear that the entente cordiale would not last much longer. The Nacionalistas were after bigger game following Avelino’s removal from office. Avelino, finding no other recourse, decided to seek his own vindication.

The call for the impeachment of the President should be viewed in the context of these political developments. There were actually preliminaries prior to the formulation of the impeachment charge. Quirino would later recall that Senator Diokno began questioning the continued existence of emergency powers of the President. He accused Quirino of “seeking to insure his election by the use of these powers”. The Chronicle (23 March 1949) reported that Diokno had expressed his belief that the President “desires to push to certain measures involving enormous appropriations of public funds which are mainly intended to help him in the polls”.

On 4 April 1949, a resolution of impeachment of the house against Quirino was filed and signed by Dr. Jose Laurel and four other followers of Avelino. The charges against Quirino were:

“First – Culpable violation of Constitution and of the laws in that, contrary to the Appropriations Act, he had wasted and misappropriated public funds;

“Second – Grave abuse of power, violation of the law, misappropriation of public funds and immoral extravagance in that he squandered at least 88,000 pesos of public funds devoted by law to other purposes;

“Third – Wicked and corrupt abuse of his power and authority, in that, the total indifference to the public interest and in unholy connivance with his brother, Antonio Quirino, a certain Brunner, a Russian subject who came to the Philippines as personal guest and whose subversive activities the American and Philippine intelligence kept under close watch, he intervened so that the Cebu Portland Cement Co. would accept 170,000 sacks of Russian cement in the contract of the Government with Yu Tong Trading Company of Shanghai, China, which cement it has not been able to use because of its bad quality, thereby causing the Republic of the Philippines tremendous amount of financial losses. Said cement could not be sold in Shanghai because it was unserviceable, for which reason it as dump into this country;

“Forth – High crime of aiding and abetting graft and corruption in the government, in that, through his brother Antonio Quirino, he intervened so that Bureau of Internal Revenue would abandon a claim against the Continental
composed of Congressman Lorenzo Sumulong (L-Rizal), as chairperson and Congressman Marcos Calo (L-Agusan), Juan Borra (L-Iloilo), Domingo Veloso (L-Leyte), Toribio Perez (L-Albay), Cipriano Primicias (N-Pangasinan), and Felixberto Serrano (N-Batangas) as members.

On 28 April 1949, the House voted 58 to 9 to reject the impeachment resolution for “lack of factual and legal basis” in all the five charges of impeachment. In an unprecedented 7-hour night session marked by impassioned speeches, the House listened to an exposition of the facts by Rep. Sumulong, chairman, who represented the majority opinion, followed by Serrano and then by Primicias. The majority opinion which the House approved was considered “a thorough, masterful exposition of the case”. The 28-page report which met with little opposition recommended: “It having been shown that the expenditures of the funds referred to in the first and second charges had been made with approval of the legal and constitutional officers charged with the duty of looking into the legality and propriety of said expenditures without the intervention of the respondent, it having been proven that there is no scintilla of evidence to indicate that he had anything to do whatsoever with the other charges, it is therefore respectfully recommended that any charges contained in the resolution of impeachment be rejected by the House of Representatives for lack of factual and legal basis.”

Out of the morass of a bitter political controversy, President Quirino emerged a true and tested national leader buoyed and confirmed in his determination to dedicate his remaining years to the service of the people. The convoluted course of his life and career had come full circle. The dashing heir of a family with roots in the fishing village of Caoayan and the Commercial Co., for war profits tax in the amount of 600,000 pesos, and so that buildings belonging to the Government might be insured for around 5,000,000 pesos with the Alto Surety and Insurance company, of which Antonio Quirino is the principal stockholder and president and general manager;

“Fifth – Gross official misconduct and with depriving government of substantial revenue and/or aiding and abetting his relatives and friends to traffic in diamonds and other gems, which was smuggled to the country from abroad by women to whom he would issue diplomatic passports, among said women being Mrs. Nila Mendoza (his sister-in-law), Mr. Antonio Rivero, Mrs. Luisa Javier, (his close friend), Mrs. Eleazar (his close friend), Mrs. Filadelfo Roxas (his close friend), Mrs. Bona (his close friend), and others”.

The impeachment resolution gave rise to a major political controversy. The Manila Times (6 April 1949) would for instance report “President Quirino’s prestige nose-dived in this province [Batangas] as the people learned through the press of the impeachment proceedings against him. Political leaders who called on Governor Feliciano Leviste said vote-getting ability of the Liberal Party has been reduced to nil, thus insuring the election of Laurel". A dispatch to the Evening Chronicle (5 April 1949) reported: “The move to impeach President Quirino stirred diverse reactions among political and legal circles here today, Governor Antonio Lopez deplored the ‘untimeliness’ of the filing of the impeachment resolution and declared that it is demoralizing the efforts of the administration to regain the faith and the confidence of the citizenry and the charges reflect on the people’s capacity for self-government”.

The House named a seven-member committee to study and report on the impeachment resolution. The committee was
Sino-Hispanic city of Vigan, Ilocos Sur, soon found that he had to confront and master the supreme challenge of Philippine history: the eternal confrontation between national pride and human necessity.

In his State of the Nation address for 1952, President Quirino most fittingly struck an upbeat note on the state of the national society. “Today,” he said, “our epoch is one of economic and political survival, of internal and external security.” Then, with his usual honesty, he posed the question: “How have we met the challenge?”

The Philippine economy in 1950 should be viewed in its pre-inflationary and inflationary phases, the two distinctly separated from each other by the outbreak of the Korean War in the middle of the year. Since 25 June 1950, the inflationary pressure on the economy had been tremendous. Trade controls had pushed important items in short-supply. Prices for Philippine exports increased. Towards the end of the year, the retail price index, as reported by the Bureau of Commerce was 245.55 (1941 equals 100) as against 225 on 24 June of the same year. This meant that the prices had increased 20 points after the first year of the Korean War and
National income for 1951 was 5,120,000,000 pesos as against 4,608,000,000 pesos in 1950. This rapid increase in productive activity reflects considerable new investment, both foreign and domestic, in plant and equipment which could not have been made there been no restoration of confidence in the future progress and stability of this country.

Employment, however, remained a critical problem. A total of 556 agricultural establishments, for instance, reported a loss of one percent in the lay-offs notably in transportation, sugar centrals and refineries, and in wholesale and retail establishments which the imposition of trade controls had adversely affected. In addition, budgetary constraints had compelled the government to lay off some 52,000 employees, mostly in the public works depart

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As member of the United Nations, the Philippines sent an expeditionary contingent to Korea. Quirino sent his son, Tomas and son-in-law, Chito Gonzalez, saying that he wanted to show the depth of his commitment to the Korean war.

Quirino in his State of the Nation Address confirmed that the cost of living which rose from June 1950 for a year has dropped substantially. Meanwhile, production improved greatly not only in the export industries but in other fields, especially mining and manufacturing. The index on the physical volume of production has risen from 97.5 in 1950 to 107.1 in 1951, with 1937 as base. There is more manufacturing going on now than ever before in the history of this country.
Prices of export products also increased. Copra in October 1950 was fetching 40 pesos per 100 kilos, about ten pesos below the postwar mark. Prices of hemp were likewise approaching new levels. The price of sugar was firm while lumber prices increased.

Thus, in his 1952 State of the Nation Address, Quirino confidently asserted:

With this improvement with our final climate, the government of the United States began the implementation in this country of the program of economic assistance promised in the Quirino Foster Agreement. ECA aid began flowing into our economy in the form of fertilizers, irrigation pumps, grants for the rehabilitation of agricultural colleges and the establishment of experimental stations and extension services, eradication of plant diseases, land survey and road building programs in Mindanao and other areas, public health promotion, survey of basic mineral resources, and promotion of cottage industries.

According to the Bell Mission Report, the country needed more adequate transportation facilities, among others, to support its program of economic development. The report also noted that the uncertainty over the future status of ships under charter had placed Philippine inter-island shipping in a “precarious position”.

The United States Congress, nearly a year after the liberation of the Philippines, approved the Philippine Rehabilitation Act of 1946 which authorized the “expenditure of 800,000,000 pesos for the restoration of private property lost or damaged in the war, and 240,000,000 pesos for the restoration and the improvement of public property and essential public services.”
The sum of 80,000,000 pesos (taken from the 240,000,000 pesos allotment for public property and public services) was allocated for the restoration of highways and bridges. The Philippine Government set up a counterpart fund amounting to 24,000,000 pesos, thereby providing a total budget of 104,000,000 pesos for the highway reconstruction program. The program was immediately launched and scheduled to be completed by 30 June 1951. At the beginning of the last quarter of 1950, a total of 54.4 percent of the projects under the program had been undertaken, with an addition 35 percent in the pipeline.

Five years after the end of the Pacific War, all prewar national, provincial and city roads, totaling 23,500 kilometers in length, had been reopened to traffic, along with 3,670 kilometers of new roads. Of the prewar temporary wooden bridges, 4,384 underwent repair or reconstruction while 242 new Bailey bridges were installed.

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, when a Japanese invasion appeared imminent, a policy decision was taken to deny to the enemy the use of the facilities, lines and equipment of the Manila Railroad Company. Eighty-five percent of the locomotives, 75 percent of the passenger coaches, 50 percent of the freight cars, and all rail motor cars were destroyed. Losses at postwar replacement costs were estimated at 120,000,000 pesos.

In December 1945, Philippine Congress appropriated 20,000,000 pesos to revitalize the operations of the railroad. Of this amount more than 18,000,000 pesos had been received plus 3,000,000 pesos in war damage claims by the US-Philippine War Damage Commission. About 1,500,000 pesos was also received from the US army as the rental of the property which it had operated in 1945.

Despite perennial financial problems, the MRR was able in 1950 to reopen its railway lines extending from San Fernando, La Union, in the north to Legaspi, Albay, in the south. The total rehabilitated trackage covered 940 kilometers, including a number of branches serving areas away from the main line. Together with the Philippine Railway Company on Panay Island which operated about 120 kilometers of railway lines, the MRR played a major role in economic development as it continues to serve important enterprises involving sugar, lumber, mining, copra, coconut, and petroleum.

Five years after the war, around 100 motor vessels with a total displacement of 28,000 tons were plying inter-island sea lanes. After liberation, the US Maritime Commission had given the Philippine government about 54 vessels of various types so as to replenish the country’s badly damaged inter-island fleet.

By 1950, about ten leading inter-island shipping operators were maintaining fleets of nine to ten fleets each. These vessels, concentrated mainly on the Manila-Cebu-Mindanao route, travelled to and from the country’s twelve ports of entry at the time: Aparri, Cagayan; San Fernando, La Union; Manila; Jose Panganiban (Mambulao), Camarines Norte; Legaspi, Albay; Iloilo, Iloilo; Cebu, Cebu; Tacloban, Leyte; Cagayan De Oro, Misamis Oriental; Zamboanga, Zamboanga; Davao, Davao; Jolo, Jolo.

The Philippine government had also recognized the need to encourage the steady growth of commercial aviation. It therefore took upon itself the responsibility of financing the establishment and operation of a national airline.
... with the absence of the major epidemic diseases like cholera, smallpox and plague, the consequent decrease of the less important communicable disease and the different forms of avitaminosis, the expectancy of life of the present day Filipinos has considerably increased. With the disappearance of these great factors that are deterrents to the enjoyment of health and the increase of population, public health workers are now beginning to turn their attention to several conditions which may be grouped under the name of degenerative diseases, especially those affecting the heart and blood vessels, the liver, the kidneys, and cancer …

In his 1952 State of the Nation address, Quirino would report that “four hospitals, nine public health centers have been recently constructed with the US war damage funds and 22 hospitals and 46 public health buildings were financed exclusively by our government”. He would further affirm:

Environmental sanitation and health education have been promoted. More artesian wells and sanitary facilities have been provided. More hospitals have increased hospital beds. More charity clinics, puericulture centers, public health nursing establishments and public health laboratories have been activated.

Preventive and sanitary measures against infectious and quarantinable diseases have prevented epidemics from indigenous sources and from abroad. Our BCG is rated the best and largest in this region. We are producing vaccines for Formosa and Indo-China, besides filling our own requirements.

...
One of the outstanding events of the 1950s was the reorganization of the government bureaucracy. The Presidential order which finally launched the government reorganization project went into effect on 1 January 1951. Piecemeal reorganization had actually been undertaken throughout the year 1950. The Government Reorganization Commission, after a careful study, recommended the establishment of eleven executive departments: Executive Office, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Justice, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Public Works and Communications, Education, Labor, National Defense, Health, and Commerce and Industry. Some changes and adjustments constituted the recommended reorganization of the Government machinery. In the Office of the President, for instance, the abolition of the following was proposed: (1) the Capital City Planning Commission and the National Urban Planning Commission (Executive Office) and transfer of their powers and duties to the National Planning Commission; (2) The Radio Broadcasting Board (Executive Office) and transfer of their powers and duties to the Philippine Information Council; and (3) the Shipping Administration (Executive Office). It was also recommended that the Philippine Information Council and the National Planning Commission be created. Other recommendations included transferring from the Office of the President offices such as National Commission on Education, Scientific and Cultural Matters to the Department of Foreign Affairs; the President’s Action Committee on Social Amelioration (PACSA) to and merger with the other units of commission to form the Social Welfare Administration; the Institute of Nutrition to the Department of Health; the Committee on School Health for Medical and Dental Services to the Department of Education; the National Transportation Board to the Department of Public Works and Communications; the Labor-Management Advisory Board to the Department of Labor; and the Bureau of Census and Statistics to the Department of Commerce and Industry.

The Presidential Order stipulated that the functions and activities of the National Commission on Educational, Scientific and Cultural Matters will be transferred to Department of Foreign Affairs, and that the Philippine Legation in Madrid and the concurrent Philippine Legations in Rome and Paris be fused into a single Philippine Legation to be headed by a Minister resident in Paris.

The abolition of the Department of Interior and transfer of its powers and duties to the Executive Office was another important indicator of change in government bureaucracy. In the Department of Finance, the abolition of Coastwise Cargo Inspection Service and the transfer of the Light House Service to the Bureau of Customs from the Philippine Naval Patrol was proposed.

In the Department of Justice, the Legal Aid Office, the Office of the People’s Counsel, and the Division of Special Attorneys were abolished. In addition, the Tenancy Law Enforcement Division and its functions were transferred to the Court of Industrial Relations. The Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources was ordered to transfer the functions and activities of the (1) Rural Progress Administration to the Bureau of Lands; and the (2) Commission on Racing from the Department of Interior to the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The Department of Public Works and Communications was given new offices to supervise: the Radio Control Division, the Radio Control Board, and the National Transportation Board.

The Committee on School Health for Medical and Dental...
The Bureau of Census and Statistics.

*** *** ***

The government, as well as the national society, in other words, stood on the verge of a take-off. More students are coming to Manila from the provinces, indicating not only the revived capacity if families to support to the aspirations for a more rewarding life, but also face the future with steadfast optimism.

In 1945, vocational education became more practical and useful. By 1950, more students than ever before were enrolled in the 245 vocational schools spread all over the country. Courses included typewriting and stenography, bookkeeping, dressmaking and embroidery, men’s and ladies’ tailoring, auto and radio mechanic, hair culture, carpentry, painting, home arts, handicraft, general mechanics, nautical course, home industries, and others. As many as 57 of these vocational schools were located in Manila such as the Aguinaldo Institute, Central Institute of Technology, De Luxe Fashion School, Feati Institute of Technology, General Institute of Technology, etc. Moreover, private educational institutions under the supervision of the Bureau of Private Schools, had greatly increased in number and strongly influenced the economic and cultural milieu of the 50’s. None other than President Quirino himself would attest to this in his 1952 State of the Nation address:

Education is another fundamental of national progress, from the standpoint of society and of production efficiency. No legislative body of the Philippines, since the days of the First Assembly, has ever been remiss in generosity for this function of public service. It is our established obsession that no child in the Philippines Services was transferred from the Office of the President to the Department of Education. Moreover, the functions of this committee were integrated into the officially sanctioned functions of the Health Education Section and the Physical Education Section of the Instruction Division to constitute a separate division to be known as the School Health Division in the Bureau of Public Schools. Moreover, the Philippine Nautical School was transferred from the Philippine Naval Patrol to the Bureau of Public Schools.

The Jai-Alai, the Boxing and Wrestling Commission and the Labor-Management Advisory Board was transferred to the Department of Labor. The Bureau of Industrial Safety was abolished and the Safety Engineering Division was revived in the Department.

The Light House Board of the Department of National Defense was abolished and to the same Department were assigned the Lighthouse Service and the Philippine Nautical School. Moreover, the Bureau of Coast and Geodetic Survey was transferred to the Department of Commerce and Industry.

The Department of Economic Coordination was abolished and an Office of the Economic Administrator was created. In the Department of Commerce and Industry, these changes were recommended: (1) restoration of the activities of the Patent Office concerning the administration of the Copyright Law of the Bureau of Public Libraries; (2) creation of the Division of Cooperatives in the Bureau of Commerce in lieu of the National Cooperatives and Small Business Corporation which is to be abolished; (3) transfer of powers, functions and activities of the National Airports Corporation to the Civil Aeronautics Administration; and (4) transfer of the Department of the Bureau of Coast and Geodetic Survey and
should be bereft of instruction. I am happy to say that in the past year as well as in the previous two years this Republic saw that this so-called school crisis has not recurred.

Last October, upon being informed that thousands of children would not be accommodated, I authorized after consultation with the Council of State the release of 1,630,000 pesos to cover the employment of additional teachers. We have now an elementary school population of four million. In the ratio of school enrollment to total population, we are rank next to the United States, the highest in any country in the world.

Through administrative adjustments we have strengthened the holding power of the schools and have brought about a much lower rate of withdrawal. The two-session program has been partially restored. Increases in enrollment have also been noted in the secondary schools in normal and technical schools, and on the collegiate level.

As an incentive to further vocational training, I have converted the Muñoz Agricultural School into a college, in the line with our policy established in the conversation of the Philippine Normal School into a college and various provincial trade and schools into national regional institutions.

Quirino noted that thirteen radio stations had been established, increasing the dimension of fantasy through the soap opera for the Filipinos. Moreover, the lights and sounds of motion pictures had certainly animated the social life of the nation. And the Filipino populace, movies like Conde’s “Siete Infantes De Lara”; “Ronquillo”; Sampaguita Pictures’ “Always – Kay Ganda Mo”; Lebran’s “Sunset Over Corregidor”; Paquito Bolero’s “Tubig na Hinugasan”; Premiere Productions’ “Doble Cara”, “Campana Sa San Diego”; Bayani Pictures’ “Kumakaway Ka Pa Irog”; LVN’s “Garrison 13” and Fernando Poe’s “Hagibis” were a memorable experience. The “new look” was in vogue (ballooned skirts and shoulder pads for blouses) and Carmen Rosales encourage the nation with “You Are My Sunshine”. Other popular songs were “In Despair” and “Cherry Pink.” Popular dances included mambo, the craze which party socialites like Baby Montelibano and Eppie Aquino exhibited in most of Manila’s social gatherings.

The optimism which the nation was experiencing during the 50’s recalled the confidence which the Filipinos managed to exude throughout the murk and misery of the 30’s when people chanting “Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf”, and together with Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers bravely sang “Let’s face the Music and Dance!” And so the nation danced the Carioca, the Tango, the Big Apple, the Boops-a-Daisy, the Shag, the Boogie-Woogie.

Slowly but surely, the country’s material foundation was becoming more firm and stable. The elite began to show the frivolity for which it has always been noted.

In 1952, President Quirino, already one of the most elegant of widowers, was mulling over a good friend’s advice to get married in preparations for the 1953 elections. Primitivo “Tibing” Lovina, former Secretary of Labor recommended to Quirino a beautiful Visayan lady and an opera singer trained in Europe: Conchita Gaston, 26-year-old daughter of sugar baron from Negros Occidental. A meeting of the two fueled rumors of a romantic relationship. Gaston had become
famous in Europe for her portrayal of the leading soprano in Bizet’s opera “Carmen”.

To be sure, because he was a widower, Quirino was continually linked romantically in the grapevine of Manila Society to various socialites. Aside from Gaston, the names included Mercedes L. Araneta, Angelita Garcia, Carmen Planas and Nila Mendoza, his sister-in-law. There was also a story about a widow who pursued Quirino, even to the extent of wanting to “over-stay” in Malacañang just to consummate her scheme. To repeated inquiries of his marital intentions, Quirino’s stock reply was that he felt already “hooked” on the presidency.

Moreover, Manila’s social atmosphere become more animated with the visit to the city of Hollywood glamor boy Cary Grant and his wife, Betsy Drake. And while Manila’s socialites created fantasies about the charming Cary Grant (for whom Julie Rufino, wife of the Luzon theater Chain owner hosted a party), the glittering fun place casino (operated by American Ted Lewin) continued to dazzled the wealthiest gamblers.

Tennis was a symbol of affluence and high status. The sport produced tennis-playing socialites like Nini Quezon (President Quezon’s daughter), Gene Mata, Chito Madrigal (daughter of the richest man in the Philippines). And to most tennis lovers, it was prestigious to play, by invitation, at the Lopa Tennis Courts in Pasay City.

Xavier Cugat, the latin band leader visited Manila to lure and daze Filipinos with the mambo and Latin music for the International Fair. During the year two beauty queens captivated the social scene: Cristina Galang was crowned Miss Philippines and escorted by the young Ninoy Aquino. Imelda Romualdez became Miss Manila and the following year 1954 captured once more the nation’s attention with her whirlwind marriage to the ilocano Congressman, Ferdinand E. Marcos.
His appointment, the Defense Department had an annual budget of 57 million Pesos. Magsaysay immediately lobbied Congress to increase the appropriation. In fiscal year 1952-53, the defense budget was increased to 147,192,246 pesos. Magsaysay planned to train and equip nine battalion combat teams capable of launching a well-coordinated attack on the Huks in Central Luzon.

Magsaysay realized that merely securing the surrender of Huks would not solve the insurgency problem. He therefore created the Economic Development Corps (EDCOR) consisting mainly of army engineers who built settlements in 6,500 hectares in Kapatagan, Lanao and 23,000 hectares in Buldon, Cotabato, in Mindanao where former insurgents were given lands to settle on, as well as farm implements and seeds. An expert from the Los Baños Agricultural School showed them how to maximize their production activities.

During the latter part of 1951, Manuel “Dindo” Gonzalez, the older brother of Luis “Chito” Gonzalez, Vicky Quirino’s husband, began to plant in Magsaysay’s mind the idea of running for President. Magsaysay pretended total indifference to the suggestion. After a brief stint in politics, he said, he only wanted to “retire from public life to work on my own farm.”

Quirino had appointed Dindo as head of the National Information Board, the PRO of the administration. Dindo lost no time in demonstrating his gratitude and skill in his new job by latching on to Magsaysay as the most promising candidate to succeed Quirino as President.

Dindo Gonzalez was persistent. He broached to Magsaysay the idea of running for the president under the banner of Nacionalista Party. This was a bold proposal – Magsaysay as opposition candidate for President. If the idea had entered
Magsaysay provided Recto approved, because he had an agreement to support his fellow Batangueño in 1953. Governor Alejo Santos of Bulacan reported that Amang Rodriguez, president of the Nacionalista Party, was also supportive of the plan to make Magsaysay the presidential candidate of the opposition.

In November 1952, at the residence of Recto in Pasay City, Magsaysay entered into a top secret agreement to proclaim his candidacy as the “Great Crusade Against the Party in Power”.

Later, Quirino invited his Secretary of National Defense to accompany him to Imus, Cavite. But Magsaysay excused himself. He was feeling indisposed, Magsaysay told the President. Quirino could not believe the excuse and found his suspicion confirmed when he saw Magsaysay driving around Dewey Boulevard upon his return to Imus. In chagrin, he told the reporters in a cocktail party in the Palace that afternoon: “Magsaysay knows nothing about affairs of state, or how to conduct them – he’s good only for the Huk’s.” The press quoted him the next day.

It was the sort of provocation Magsaysay had been waiting for. The day following the press report of the President’s remarks, he sent to the Palace his letter of resignation. And for Quirino, it was the final confirmation of his suspicion that Magsaysay would be his opponent in the next presidential elections.

When he resigned from the cabinet to join the Nacionalista Party and later receive its nomination for President, Magsaysay announced that “he resigned not as a millionaire but as a poor man”. He was speaking the honest truth, and it was good politics as well. But a question in the mind of many
voters remained unanswered: Who financed the extravagant campaign activities that actually produced the sudden Magsaysay boom? Match lighters, T-shirts, music records, cigars, fountain pens, calendars, automobile stickers were widely distributed around the country. Radio announcements and newspaper advertisements continuously screamed about Magsaysay’s bid for presidency. Indeed, long before the nomination, the Magsaysay boom had already been well publicized through an expensive propaganda barrage.

It was common knowledge that the 1953 was one of the most exciting and certainly the most expensive the country had ever witnessed. The Magsaysay campaign machinery was well oiled: Magsaysay and his campaign personnel hopped from one barrio to the next with dizzying spiel and elan, using the speediest available means of transportation, and giving generous handouts to people who habitually ask for money during elections. Unofficial reports allege that the Nacionalista Party spent about 1,000,000 for transportation alone and 500,000 for printing and mailing. For the elaborate convention held at Manila Hotel on 23 April 1953, the party allotted 50,000 pesos.

It was also common knowledge that the biggest contributors to Magsaysay’s campaign funds were Americans. Magsaysay was widely known as the American favorite in the coming presidential race. Acting on the suspicion that substantial funds were coming from abroad, the ruling Liberal Party threatened to block all American dollar remittances through the Central Bank. Liberal campaign manager Eugenio Perez charged that the Nacionalista Party had solicited funds from American business firms, and on 9 October 1953 threatened to expose the list of American firms which Senator Gil Puyat had reportedly approached for contributions. The Liberal Party charged that Senator Puyat, sent by the Senate as official representative of the Philippines to the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference abroad, spend most of his time soliciting campaign contributions from foreign firms.

The charge of foreign intervention in the election involved not only American Embassy officials in the Philippines and the Joint United States Military Aid Group (JUSMAG) officers but also some 25 foreign correspondents representing American magazines and newspapers, who had come to the Philippines to gain first-hand information about the presidential election. These correspondents transmitted unfavorable reports about Quirino and the Liberal administration while lauding Magsaysay and the Nacionalista Party. Typical was a comment of Robert Sherrod in the Saturday Evening Post (25 December 1952):

In a country better seasoned in the ways of democracy President Quirino would hardly stand for reelection, a low-bracket politician who was elected vice president in the 1946 election. Upon Roxas’ death in 1948 Quirino became the head of state. In 1949, Quirino in an election notable for frauds, terror and murder, he was re-elected through his apologists claim that he probably would have won even if the balloting was honest.

Magsaysay does not read many books, he is crude and he might look clumsy in international councils, as the more polished Liberal charged. But he is honest, and the missing ingredients in the Philippines today are honesty and conscience.

The Quirino-Magsaysay relationship resulted in an unusual, perhaps even unique episode in Philippine political history.
or amendment to the constitution. While the defects of the electoral process afforded advantages to the party in power, the opposition was not about to deprive itself of those same advantages in the event it would assume power. The electoral system was left intact – a potential danger to both political parties.

The other important development was the changing environment for American power in the Asian Pacific region. The US wanted to consolidate its forces in the region in the face of the escalating war in Vietnam, the victory of the national liberation forces in China, and the emergence of a divided Korea. Crucial to the prospects of US power in the region were the US bases in the Philippines which the rising nationalist sentiment in the country had begun to question.

In the course of such negotiations, the US have preferred not to face Quirino who had already revealed his position as a member of the Commonwealth Mission led by Quezon which got the Tydings-MacDuffie Law and, later, in the negotiations with Paul McNutt.

The packaging of Magsaysay himself for the Presidency was done prudently in the face of his obvious handicaps. His educational background did not measure up to the tradition established for the presidency. All his predecessors had been lawyers who distinguished themselves while still occupying minor positions. Quezon was a lawyer and a distinguished orator; so were Osmeña, Roxas and the incumbent, Quirino.

The CIA tried to turn Magsaysay’s provincial background and his modest educational equipment into assets by pointing out that these handicaps placed him on a level with the vast majority of the common people.

Initially, there was no compelling reason for Magsaysay to defect to another party to promote his ambitions to the 1953
presidential elections. Quirino had been President for more than one term. His health had not been good and it was the desire of his family, particularly his children that he should retire from politics. As a close friend of the family and a protégé of the president, Magsaysay shared the opinion of the Quirino children who thought it was high time for him to settle down and rest. “We preferred a live father,” said Vicky, “to a dead president.”

The suggestion at first did not create a split in the Liberal Party. It was the party’s old guard who strongly urged Quirino to seek the nomination of the Party in the 1953 elections. But like the suggestive predictions of the witches in Macbeth, Dindo Gonzalez’ remarks did unleash ambitions and speculations in certain quarters. Talk of Magsaysay becoming president become rife. The NPs, wanting to decimate the powerful machinery of the LP, began sowing intrigue. For his part, Magsaysay continued to reassure Quirino that he had no intention of seeking the LP nomination. But it was Recto himself who nonchalantly approached Quirino during a party to tell him that Magsaysay would be the standard bearer of the NP.

During the Lions International Conference in Mexico, perhaps on the instigation of Dindo Gonzalez who was the Lions president here, Magsaysay was invited to deliver the keynote speech. The speculation was that it would be an occasion for Magsaysay to announce his candidacy and, in the course of the trip, conclude arrangement with his American supporters.

Despite such persistent rumors, Magsaysay kept reassuring Quirino that he had no political ambitions — not, anyway, if Quirino wanted to run for reelection. To allay any suspicion that he would indeed work out some deals with American supporters for his campaign, he invited Vicky to accompany him. Vicky was eager to go; the trip to Mexico excited her. And so, with Vicky, Chito and Dindo Gonzalez, Magsaysay left for Mexico.

There was, however, a fourth member of the party, namely Col. Edward Landsdale. At the time, Vicky did not realize the implications of his presence. She was too young and innocent to question the motives of Magsaysay whom she regarded as a member of the family.

During the stop-over to Honolulu, Magsaysay’s party was met by officials of the Pentagon, and made use of Pentagon facilities for the rest of the trip. The presence of another American official who joined the party in Honolulu was particularly intriguing. He was Col. Harvey Short. It was he who was footing all expenses and appeared to have unlimited funds. Later, Short joined the US embassy staff in the Philippines.

On the return of Magsaysay from Mexico, the rumors about his being a presidential candidate became even more rife. Since Quirino had already announced his intentions to run for reelection, speculations encouraged by NP leaders like Laurel and Recto was that the NP door was open to receive Magsaysay. Once, when Tony Quirino, who had first-hand knowledge of the negotiations, told the President that Magsaysay was defecting to the NP, Quirino dismissed the information. When Montano and Tañada were criticizing Quirino on the floor of Congress, Magsaysay had gone to Quirino and offered to assassinate the leaders of the opposition. “He’ll never betray me,” Quirino told his brother. “I have proven his loyalty.”

At another time, military intelligence confirmed rumors that
Quirino’s enemies, including the HMB, were out to assassinate him. Magsaysay offered to sleep across the entrance to Quirino’s bedroom. How could anyone believe that Magsaysay would deceive Quirino?

Within the LP camp, a quiet and subtle factionalism had developed, with some members strongly persuaded that Quirino should not seek reelection anymore, and Vicky still confident that she would be able to persuade her father not to run. Those who were opposed outright to Quirino’s reelection bid – did this group include Magsaysay? – therefore, began working closely with Vicky. Others, like Dindo Gonzalez, were strongly urging Quirino not to run anymore, telling him outright that he was too old and too sick to withstand the rigour of the campaign. Vicky would advice these people that they were using “the wrong psychology to work on the President”, while persisting in her own mode of personal persuasion. To Vicky, Quirino would say that the party needed him, that the 1953 elections would be a crucial test for the survival of the LP. It was the party that put him in the Presidency and he did not want to appear ungrateful.

Finally, Magsaysay officially and publicly signed his affiliation with the NP at the Club Filipino. The same day, in the afternoon, he went to Malacañang but did not tell Quirino what happened. On the contrary, he continued to deny the rumors which by then had become rampant. Magsaysay’s affiliation with the NP was the headline story in all the newspapers.

Quirino received Magsaysay’s letter of resignation through an emissary four months after he had affiliated with the NP. In effect, he had joined the opposition while serving as the Defense Secretary of the Quirino administration, violating a cardinal rule of party loyalty and decency. When Tony Quirino confronted him with the rumor, Magsaysay denied it. He continued to deny his affiliation with the NP until after he had sent his letter of resignation to Quirino, four months after the fact. While sorting out his father’s papers after the elections as they were preparing to go to Novaliches, Vicky came upon the letter in one of the drawers of her father’s study. It was still sealed.

Regarding Magsaysay’s behavior, Quirino himself, speaking with the wisdom of years and experience, tried afterwards to offer an explanation. “He may not have wanted to betray me,” he was to say later, “but the opportunities were just too tempting. With the CIA support, the Presidency was virtually in the bag for him.”

During the campaign, perhaps the most acrimonious in our political history, not once did Magsaysay and Quirino personally attack each other. The most acerbic denunciations of Quirino came from the Lopez faction of the sugar bloc, for which Fernando Lopez was later to apologize.

The Magsaysay-CIA collaboration against Quirino’s reelection was further complicated for the entry of the Church into the fray. Leaders of the most conservative sector of the Church representations made to President Quirino for the inclusion of religious instruction in the school curriculum.

This was highly sensitive issue since the 1935 constitution provided for a secular system of public education. At the same time, it explicitly mandated the separation of church and state. Thus, the teaching of religion in public schools – any religion for that matter – had consistently been disallowed since the coming of the Americans. Secular education in
principle and practice had become ingrained in the Philippine public school system even before the adoption of the 1935 Constitution.

The principle of the separation of church and state and the practice of excluding religious instruction from the curriculum of the public schools had been inherent elements of the democratic system which the Filipino revolutionaries of 1896 as well as the American colonial regime had wanted to establish in lieu of the medieval colonial system imposed by the Spaniards.

The establishment of the secular public educational system was not won without a struggle. A long and acerbic public debate preceded its adoption. The defenders of the old system were unwilling to give up their outmoded values and traditions. Trinidad H. Pardo De Tavera, a distinguished Filipino scholar and philosopher of Spanish origin, one of the leading critics of the Spanish colonial system, satirized the old educational system with a mordant essay entitled, “El Legado del Ignorantismo”.

What the church hierarchy was asking Quirino to do, therefore, was quite literally an earth-shaking proposition. Raul Manglapus and Francisco “Soc” Rodrigo, who were close to Magsaysay were among those who actively participated in the lobby. In Congress, Senator Mariano Cuenco, brother of the Catholic Bishop of Cebu, led the pressure group. The so called “Catholic vote” was at stake. Nor were the pro-religious instruction proponents without foreign supporters. Monsignor Vagnozzi, apostolic delegate and doyen of the democratic corps, openly supported the movement.

Quirino remained adamant. In search of a compromise, Bishop Cuenco one day asked Judge Tony Quirino to suggest to the President that if he himself did not want to come out openly for religious instruction, perhaps a bill could be introduced in Congress making religious instruction in public schools mandatory.

Judge Quirino, thinking of the Catholic vote of the coming elections thought the compromise might be acceptable. Anyway, he surmised, if the President really thought the principle repugnant, he could always change his mind and perhaps cause the law to be amended after the elections. Realpolitik was beginning to win the day.

Tony Quirino went to Malacañang believing that a serious threat to the LP would soon be lifted. The President had just finished his exercise and lay prone on his bed, having a massage. Tony conveyed to him the message from the Catholic Bishop.

The President lifted his head and looked at his brother straight in the eyes. “That is against my principles,” he said with such finality that Tony did not pursue the topic any further.

Confronted by President Quirino’s adamant position, the Church decided to unleash a campaign against him. He was accused of allowing himself to be “poisoned” intellectually by Secretary of Public Instruction Prudencio Langcauon and the Bureau of Public Schools Director Benito Pangilinan who happened to be Freemasons. Quirino was asked to dismiss them from offices – a suggestion he pointedly ignored.

In the course of the election campaign, during a sortie in Bicol, Quirino visited the widely venerated image of the Virgin of Peñafrancia. As he was sick and the pain of bursitis prevented him from climbing the steps of the altar leading to
the image of the Virgin, he was unable to kiss the image. His failure to do so was used against him during the campaign.

Following the LP debacle in the 1953 elections, Vicky was bitterly disappointed, but her father told her: “The priests are only human. You should not turn your back on God.”

On the other hand, Monsignor Vagnozzi, the apostolic delegate, as a peace offering, allowed a chapel to be built in the Antonio Quirino home.

Upon the same level of moral rectitude and spiritual integrity, President Quirino in his speech upon accepting an honorary LL.D. from the University of the Philippines, his Alma Mater, said: “We need more urgently than ever to rediscover God and the creative benedictions of His discipline. We should ever invoke a deeper love of country predicated upon actual toil and devotion.”

After the 1953 elections Bishop Sancho of Vigan visited Quirino. “I am where you wanted me to be,” he told the Bishop, without rancor or bitterness.

CHAPTER 11

The 1953 Elections

The 1953 presidential elections saw a large number of political leaders switch freely between the contending parties. But it was the Nacionalista Party which most benefited from this practice since it was able to welcome into its ranks several Liberal Party leaders, including Magsaysay.

Apart from Magsaysay, Quirino’s own Vice-President, Fernando Lopez, defected from the Liberal Party on the eve of the Liberal convention to join the Democratic Party, which had Carlos P. Romulo as its presidential candidate, but which later coalesced with the Nacionalista Party.

The defection which proved to be highly controversial was that of Mariano Jesus Cuenco, following his “irrevocable resignation” as Economic Coordination Administrator. Quirino had appointed him to the cabinet ostensibly to appease him. The report that Quirino was responsible for the defeat of Cuenco, the father, who ran for the Senate and of Manuel Cuenco, the son, who ran for the governorship of Cebu in the
1951 elections was common knowledge among Cebuanos. Cuenco submitted his resignation following controversies with the President involving the management of government corporations under his supervision. Upon tendering his resignation, Cuenco immediately made a damaging expose about the Quirino administration and various anomalies in the government-owned corporations.

Cuenco had announced that he was going to abroad for a vacation. But he suddenly changed his plans on leaving after Quirino designated Governor Sergio Osmeña, Jr., his bitter political rival, to replace him. This new political development further embittered the rivalry between two rival Visayan groups composed of Cuenco, Lopez, and Lacson known as the Visayan bloc, and the anti-terrorist faction compose of Osmeña, Araneta, Yulo, and Avelino.

Among the Congressmen, the most notable defector to the Nacionalista Party was Emmanuel Pelaez of Oriental Misamis. Pelaez had been elected for the first time to Congress under the Liberal Party banner the in the 1949 elections. He gained prominence with his posture of independence, voting several times against his own party. But his independent stance was interpreted by party colleagues as indicating a gradual shift of party allegiance. In fact, he had already been closely associated with prominent Nacionalista leaders. His acts interpreted by the Liberals as Pro-Nacionalista including his strong opposition to the following: an appointive mayor system for the city of Manila, a new move to grant emergency powers to President Quirino, the total suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, and the appointment of Emilio Abello as presiding justice of the Court of Appeals. He bitterly condemned government extravagance and the Malacañang Bolo Boys, and was one of the most active members of the progressive bloc in the House which opposed many administration measures.

In Northern Luzon, the much talked about solid following of the Liberal Party was shattered with the defection of former Speaker Pro-Tempore Francisco Ortega of La Union. Ortega, until then a Malacañang technical assistant, protested against Quirino’s invitation to Camilo Osias, his arch enemy to join the Liberal Party.

In Ilocos Sur, Quirino’s home province, former governor Perfecto Faypon also announced his defection to the Nacionalista Party — a move widely anticipated after Quirino had strongly opposed Faypon’s bid for the governorship in the 1951 elections. To support the candidacy of Eliseo Quirino, the President’s brother against Faypon, substantial public works funds allotted to the province had been released — an endemic practice in Philippines politics. Magsaysay’s candidacy induced many politicians to shift their allegiance to the Nacionalista Party. Candidates for congressional seats regardless of party tried to ride on Magsaysay’s popularity by distributing sample ballots with Magsaysay’s name. Liberal Party candidates deliberately omitted President Quirino’s name from their leaflets and speeches.

For the Liberal Party, on the other hand, raising campaign funds for the 1953 elections was not a problem. Within the ranks of the Liberal Party were wealthy politician likes Jose Yulo who, together with party treasurer J. Amado Araneta, controlled the multi-million-peso sugar industry in the Visayas; the shipping magnate Vicente Madrigal, and the President’s brother Antonio Quirino, who owned sprawling business interest such as the Alto Pipe and Foundry Co.,
the Alto Surety and Insurance, Alto Sales and Co., the Alto Electronics which included radio and television stations and the Counterpoint Publishing Co. There were also speaker Eugenio Perez, reportedly the owner of several business and real estate enterprises, and the well-to-do Sergio Osmeña, Jr. who in the late 1952 promised at least P1,000,000 for the campaign fund of a Quirino-Magsaysay ticket of the Liberal Party.

But the Liberal Party faced a major drawback in its campaign. At the time of the Liberal party convention which he failed to attend, Quirino was already ill. The month following his nomination, Quirino virtually disappeared from public view. He rarely emerged from Malacañang and seldom allowed himself to be photographed. Governor Eliseo Quirino later revealed that the President had been bedridden since 18 May, suffering from chills, fever and inability to retain food.

On 27 June 1953, Quirino, accompanied by his personal physician, Dr. Agerico Sison and his brother Eliseo left for the United State to undergo an operation for ulcer at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. Since internal bleeding continued after the first operation, Quirino had to undergo a second operation. The second rendered his condition very critical. A wild rumor about his death started when a visiting priest was said to have administered extreme unction to Quirino. As unconfirmed reports of his critical condition reached Manila his party followers became worried and confused. Democratic Party members hurriedly fetched Vice-President Lopez from a campaign tour in the Visayas and urged him to stay close to Malacañang.

Dubious about the true physical condition of Quirino in spite of periodic bulletins issued by John Hopkins hospital physicians in Baltimore, members of the Democratic Party and the Nacionalista Party began urging Vice-President Lopez to take over the Presidency on the ground that the President was incapacitated. But the legal question regarding who or which body had the power to determine such incapacity stood in the way.

Meanwhile, confusion and uncertainty reigned in the Liberal Party ranks as well. Anticipating the improbability of Quirino’s speedy recovery to enable him to campaign actively in the provinces, some Liberal Party leaders began suggesting that Quirino should withdraw from the presidential race. The political advantage which Magsaysay and his Nacionalista colleagues were gaining from their barrio-to-barrio campaign strategy clearly threatened Quirino’s political future. The weakening hold of the Liberal Party on the public was becoming increasingly obvious and only the actual physical presence of their presidential candidate could save the party from impending political disaster.

Optimism once again filled the ranks of the Liberal Party as the nation prepared to welcome Quirino. On 7 September 1953, after 72 days of absence from the political front, Quirino returned animated and invigorated. Though already a political opponent, Vice-President Lopez headed as estimated welcoming crowd of 60,000 composed mostly of government officials and school children. Everyone seemed astonished as Quirino walked down the ramp with firm steps, in apparent good health, and announced in his arrival speech that he was actively taking over a nation-wide campaign of the Liberal Party. He attacked his political opponents, especially those who had defected from his party and entered into an “unholy alliance” with the Opposition.
That economic interests strongly dominated political developments during the 1953 elections be deduced from the fact the largest, most generous financial supporters of the two presidential aspirants were the sugar lords. Indeed, the 1953 presidential elections served as a stage of the struggle between the two major rival sugar blocs - a struggle for financial dominance between the Lopez bloc (Fernando and Eugenio, including Alfredo Montelibano, Rafael Lacson, Senator Esteban Abada and Oscar Ledesma), on the one hand, and the Yulo-Araneta bloc, on the other.

The Yulo-Araneta combine controlled at least four sugar centrals with a total production of about 2,850,000 piculs, and an approximate total income of P39,900,000. They represented the so-called centralistas whose legislative concerns involved the adoption of laws that would increase the sugar planters’ share in the proceeds of production. There had been attempts to increase the sugar planters’ share by 5 percent which would mean that the income of the centralistas would be reduced by about P2,000,000 a year. Here lies the simple logic of spending millions of pesos during elections in order to protect vested to economic interests.

Eugenio Lopez wanted his brother Fernando to be Quirino’s running mate again. But there was Jose Yulo, another Liberal, then being groomed by the Yulo-Araneta group to run as Vice-President. This rivalry placed Quirino in a dilemma. He had to come out openly in favor of one thereby losing the powerful political support of the other. Quirino tried to exert every effort to pacify the two blocs of sugar barons in order to maintain the support of both in the elections. When speaker Perez had a bitter controversy with the Lopez brothers in the early part of 1952, it was through the good offices of Malacañang that they were reconciled. The real quarrel, however, was between the Yulo-Araneta group and the Lopezes. When Speaker Perez charged that these “vested interests” (referring to the Lopezes) were planning to oust him from his position as Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Lopezes, through their newspaper the Manila Chronicle, countercharged by imputing to House leader certain alleged “shady” transactions with Chinese businessmen.

The different sugar groups, however, shared a common interest in the continued export of sugar to the US market. They therefore had to maintain a necessary linkage to an administration that favored the extension of free trade relations and enjoyed the political patronage of the US government. And they thought that Magsaysay, not Quirino, possessed the ingredient necessary to sustain the effort to ensure the uninterrupted export of sugar. Thus, in Negros, the Nacionalista candidates won: Negros Occidental, home province of Vice-President candidate Yulo, gave him 47,873 as against 70,748 for Garcia. Magsaysay received 88,257 votes while Quirino got 35,115. In Negros Oriental, Magsaysay received 36,718 while Quirino got 21,549.

The Liberal administration had also been exerting efforts to the increase rice production. But the perennial rice crisis persisted and continued to affect adversely the nation’s livelihood, particularly in the countryside. Quirino’s administration faced the problem of reducing the buying price of rice so that it would be within the average wage earner. Middlemen, especially alien merchants, usually dictated the price. The Liberal administration tried to use the NARIC (National Rice and Corn Corporation) to stabilize the prices of rice and corn and make these staple products readily accessible to the masses. But the Nacionalistas claimed that Quirino’s government was so graft-ridden that it failed in this objective. Thus, Magsaysay
highlighted his favorite campaign theme of “development of the rural areas first”. He constantly deplored the desperate condition of farmers in the agricultural areas who produced the staple food crops and have been irresponsibly neglected for years. The priority measures of his program, if elected, included raising the productivity and prosperity of the barrio people, by organizing rural credit banks, erecting grains elevators and warehouse, and installing irrigation units.

The management of the coconut industry also influenced the prospects of the ruling Liberal administration in the 1953 elections. The National Coconut Corporation (NACOCO), created under Commonwealth Act 5118 on 7 May 1940, was a government corporation created to establish, keep and maintain copra manufacture, which had suffered heavy losses in 1948. The corporation was said to have “squandered more than three and one-half million pesos of government money” through mismanagement. It had no fixed policy or ready strategy to meet a variety of problems such as uncertain legislative practices in the US, the recurrence of natural disasters and diseases, confusion in government efforts to effect a solution, all leading to general retrogression in the different aspects of the coconut industry.

Like sugar, coconut prospered in the US market. This required to coconut-producing provinces to exert every effort to have a government administration which could effectively negotiate favorable trade agreements with the US government. This was one of the reasons why the Tayabas and Laguna electorate voted overwhelmingly in favor of a change of administration in the hope that from a new one they would enjoy a better deal in the markets. Under the Quirino administration, the coconut growers insistently lobbied for a bill to create the Philippine Coconut Institute (PHILCOCIN) with sufficient funding to ensure the continuing study of the problems of the Philippine coconut industry. But Quirino vetoed the bill and in so doing threw many of the coconut producing provinces into the arms of the opposition. Thus, Quezon province gave Magsaysay 97,398 votes, and Quirino 13,567. In Laguna, Magsaysay got 73,816, and Quirino 14,155.

The 1953 elections also stood out because never before had the people so spontaneously and deeply concerned themselves with their right to vote and to express their will through the ballot. Civic organizations previously indifferent to politics pooled their resources to launch a campaign for free and honest elections. The past elections had been fraught with cheating, fraud and terrorism. Thus, NAMFREL adopted this slogan, “Protect the Ballot and Save the Nation” in the belief that the Philippines could only be saved through free and honest elections. The Philippines Veterans Legion, in its national convention in Iloilo city on 1 June 1951, passed a resolution calling on all national civic, fraternal, religious, professional, labor and veterans groups in the Philippines to form an organization for the purpose of helping bring about free, clean and honest elections on 12 November 1951 and thereafter.

With Philippine Veterans Legion Commander Jaime N. Ferrer as the national coordinator, the NAMFREL, a duly organized corporation, had for its first board of directors Fernando Balboa, Amelito Mutuc, E. Voltaire Garcia, Arturo Alafriz, Baltazar Cuyugan, Manuel Roxas, Minerva Laudico, Aurea Del Carmen, Juan Tan, Francisco Rodrigo, Virginia Liwag, Gonzalo Villa and Sol Gwekoh.

The NAMFREL organized a systematic campaign on a nationwide scale stressing its activities in barrios and villages. In the
Quirino had gained the presidency in 1947 by a sudden turn of events - President Roxas’ unexpected demise. To most Liberals, including the late president Roxas himself, the victory of the Liberal Party in 1946 was essentially brought out by the influence of Jose Avelino who, together with Roxas, had founded the Party. But in 1949, it was Quirino who was the duly elected Vice-President of the republic.

Quirino tried his best to get “all elements united to buckle down to the work of rehabilitation and reconstruction”. He could not afford to create dissension in the Liberal Party. But a split in the party ranks was precipitated by the rift between Quirino and Avelino. In a speech delivered at the bahay kubo in Malacañang, the latter questioned Quirino’s decision to order the investigation of alleged anomalies committed by members of the Liberal party. Saying that even a saint would condone the sins of a thief, Avelino bluntly argued: “We are not angels. When we die we all go to hell where there are no investigations, no Secretary of Justice, no Secretary of Interior to go after us.” With brutal cynicism he added:

Graft in the government is inevitable. You can’t stop it so you might as well make the best of it. Everybody knows that politicians and government officials are no angels, so why make such an embarrassing point of it? Why have all these unnecessary investigations? Why expose all this perfectly legitimate graft in the newspapers? It is bad for the party. If it weren’t for all these investigations there would be no public clamor because the public wouldn’t know anything about it.

Avelino’s speech provided sensational material for newspaper editorials and opinion columns. Avelino accused Quirino of deliberately allowing the press people to enter Malacañang
Avelino’s open and deliberate defiance of Quirino’s authority provoked bitter recrimination within the Liberal Party. As President Roxas’ successor, Quirino enjoyed enormous political advantage over Senator Avelino. Despite Avelino’s position as president of both the Liberal Party and the Senate, therefore, it was a reckless strategy for Avelino to oppose Quirino in an open fight.

On 21 February 1949, Senator Mariano J. Cuenco replaced Avelino as Senate President. Soon afterwards, the National Committee of the Liberal party undertook other “cleansing measures” to relieve Avelino of his responsibilities as chairman of the Liberal Party. Speaker Eugenio Perez assumed the leadership of the party.

The Avelinistas (ALP: Avelino Wing of the Liberal Party) resolve to challenge Quirino in the forthcoming elections was shown when, in the 12 May convention, they nominated Avelino as their candidate for president and Vicente J. Francisco for vice-president. In his acceptance speech, Avelino said:

We have been challenged and we shall fight. We shall fight and we shall win. We shall win because we are fighting for justice. We shall win because we are fighting for the common people. I accept your nomination to be leader of this leaderless nation, not for myself, but as the symbol and the instrument of the victim of injustice, the disinherited of fortune, the forgotten, and the persecuted.

In the same convention, Avelino harped on Quirino’s failure to bring about peace and order in the country which he claimed resulted in many unnecessary crimes such as the tragic killing of Mrs. Aurora A. Quezon and her daughter, Baby, and son-in-law, Philip Buencamino III.
On 12 June, the Quirinistas (QLP: Quirino Wing of the Liberal party) held their convention and nominated Quirino for president and Senator Fernando Lopez of Iloilo for vice president.

For their part, the Nacionalista party read the conflict within the ruling Liberal Party as an encouraging signal for the opposition to take on an aggressive role to “purify the Augean stables” of the Liberal administration. On 22 May, the Nacionalistas nominated Dr. Jose P. Laurel as their presidential candidate and Associate Justice Manuel C. Briones of Cebu as Laurel’s running mate.

During the campaigns, other contending parties emerged: Young Philippines, Popular Front, Democrata Nacional, and Philippine Youth Party. These minor parties eventually opted to support the opposition Nacionalista party. Some individual politicians, however, like Senator Tomas Cabili and Tomas Confesor, objected to the choice of Laurel as the presidential nominee of the opposition. They left the Nacionalistas and openly endorsed the Quirino-Lopez tandem. Two Quirinistas of the Liberal Party, on the other hand, Jose C. Zulueta and Senator Lorenzo M. Tañada decided to change their political loyalties and proceeded to organize their own parties. Zulueta founded the Colectivista Party which later joined forces with Laurel’s party. Tañada established the Citizen’s Party together with a group of young professionals.

The 1949 election revolved around several issues. The Avelinistas, for instance, attacked Quirino as a dictator who regarded himself “above the constitution, with little or no respect for the law”. The accusation was a reaction to Quirino’s statement in a speech delivered in Bacolod:

The constitution would be merely a scrap of paper unless we give life and soul to it, and we as a united people exert all our efforts toward the immediate economic development of our country and thereby ward off the threats of Communism from without and within our shores.

The limits of presidential power as provided in the constitution has ever been the subject of deep public concern. Quezon as President of the Commonwealth was often accused of “dictatorial tendencies” for pushing presidential authority to its farthest limits. Laurel underscored the important role he had played in drafting the constitution, specially the Bill of Rights which was copied from the Constitution of the United States. Recto, former president of the 1934 Constitutional Convention, chided Quirino for reducing the constitution to a mere “scrap of paper”.

Quirino’s acts and policies in relation to the opposition could be profitably examined in the light recent or contemporary history, in particular, the temptation to have recourse to authoritarianism which another Ilocano president after him, Ferdinand Marcos, could not resist.

The provisions relating to the powers of the President in the 1935 Constitution derived in part from the ambiguous attempt of the framers to transmute into the powers of the Philippine President, the authority that used to be exercised by the American Governor-General in colonial times. Latter-day commentators, therefore, may be correct in ascribing certain atavistic vestiges of colonialism to the letter and spirit of 1936 Constitution.
Quezon and Quirino were not alone in trying to push the limits of the authority of the President under the 1936 Constitution. Macapagal was also accused of wanting to resort to authoritarian rule, and so was Garcia, especially after the discovery of the CIA plan to foist a coup within the military which compelled Garcia to increasingly rely on the rangers, prompting the criticism against him of wanting to establish “ranger justice”.

The suspension of the writ of habeas corpus by Quirino was prompted by the actual threats to national security – not only deriving from the continued existence of the military arm of the Communist party or the rise in the incidence of criminality, but also from the continued use by the elite of their private armies.

Understandably, the suspension of the writ made the opposition apprehensive. The pervading fear of reprisal, in turn made “democracy” the central issue in the political debate. From the point of view of the opposition, both the Quirinista Liberals and the Avelinista Liberals have failed to live up to the expectations of the people. It accused the ruling party of running a “ruthless and avaricious” government at the expense of the more popular sectors of society. Avelino dangled democracy as the key component of his presidential vision for the country. In one of his speeches, he declared: “We shall decide whether this Republic shall survive as a democracy or shall become a tool of selfish interest and personal ambition.” Saying that he had been eating and sleeping with the masses during the campaign, he questioned “whether democracy in the Philippines can really survive since the people are divided into the over-privileged few and the under-privileged many”.

Not to be outdone, Quirino also campaign for democracy. He countered the criticisms of his political rivals in plain and simple language with stories culled from his personal life. In one speech he recalled the agony he suffered when he was detained in Fort Santiago during the Japanese occupation while Laurel was enjoying “complacent ease and comfort in Malacañang”.

Since Quezon’s time, presidential succession was a political issue in which the United States played a decisive role. Quezon, for instance, at a certain point, realized that he was unpopular even among his cabinet members. It was then Vice-President Osmeña, in his desire to maintain political harmony in the newly independent Republic, who prepared a letter signed by Quezon and other leaders which appealed to the United States Congress for the decision on the question of leadership in the Philippines.

When Quirino visited Washington in August, the election campaign was at its peak. The Avelinistas criticized Quirino’s trip. While assuring President Truman that Quirino was not the presidential candidate most voters would support, they reiterated the desire of the Filipino people that the United States would refrain from intervening in the forthcoming elections.

The Quirinista won the elections on 8 November 1949. Out of 3,700,778 registered voters, Quirino received 1,803,808 votes, Laurel 1,318,330, and Avelino 419,890. Quirino’s running mate got 1,714,284 votes as against 1,184,215 for Briones and 444,510 for Francisco. Quirino received more votes than Laurel and Avelino combined. The QLP also won eight seats in the Senate and sixty-eight out of the one hundred seats in the House.
On 30 December 1949, Quirino was inaugurated as president in his own right. In his inaugural address, he promised the nation that “the next four years will be years of positive work and accomplishment”. Describing his program of development and social and amelioration as “bold and ambitious”, he complacently asked: “Why attempt anything less?”

The 1949 election, as Quirino himself was to recall in his memoirs, was a “riotous exercise”. A Muslim leader perhaps epitomized the spirit of comedy that pervaded the campaign when he said of the candidates: “Avelino is good, Laurel is better, but Quirino is the best”.

The 1949 elections exposed the built-in defects of the electoral system, specifically its vulnerability to manipulation, and not only by the party in power. For instance, the Nacionalistas, while vigorously condemning the frauds committed by the Liberals, were themselves engaged in deploying “flying voters”. The anomalies ascribed to Quirino’s party, though not necessarily involving him in their planning and execution, had in fact become integral features of the Philippine electoral process. They were part and parcel of an elitist democratic system which the Filipinos were allowed if not encouraged to set up during the early years of the American regime as a device to facilitate colonial governance and control.

The popular press of Quirino’s time, however, tried to make it appear as if the fraudulent 1949 election was the unique and exclusive creation of Elpidio Quirino – a calumny which cast its long, dark shadow upon the 1953 elections, and beyond.

While it was true that Quirino was determined to seek reelection in 1953, the elections actually provoked issues other than those of personal ambition. The members of his immediate family were against his candidacy. Quirino was a sick man. From Baltimore, recalls Vicky, they had to stop to Honolulu and delay their return to the Philippines in order to give him time to rehearse walking down the ramp. His foot was bandaged, thus providing a stock image for the Chronicle cartoonist, Gatbonton. It was painful, said Vicky, to watch him trying to take a few halting, painful steps.

At the Manila Airport, however, he was able to walk down the ramp to a makeshift stage. His Vice-President, Fernando Lopez, now the running mate of Romulo in the Democratic Party, graciously tried to help him. Quirino parried the proffered assistance with his cane. The welcoming crowd roared with approval.

In his extemporaneous speech, Quirino rose to the challenge of the occasion.
of the nature of institutional labor.

In 1953, as in 1949, the Liberal Party was decimated by factionalism and defections. Magsaysay had crossed over to the Nacionalista Party; Romulo and Lopez unable to secure the assurance of nomination at the LP convention, went off to organize their own party. Although the Democratic Party elicited some enthusiastic support especially from the young voters among college students, it soon became clear that it had little chance of long-term survival. The LP, therefore, provided the only organized political alternative to the NP, capable of preventing the 1953 elections from becoming a one-party stampede.

Political parties in the Philippines seldom fall back for support upon their “histories.” In other cultures where the party stands as the vanguard of a self-renewing popular movement, Quirino’s efforts to revitalize a moribund LP would have been recognized as an important contribution to the preservation of democracy – but not in this country, and not at that particular time.

Given Quirino’s physical infirmity at the time, and given the resources at the command of the NP and Magsaysay, the efforts of Quirino to turn the tide could only be regarded as heroic. Because of the Magsaysay mania, there was a danger of enshrining the cult of personality in the Philippine political life. It raised the spectre of “dictatorship” – a dangerous possibility which Recto, Laurel and Manila Mayor Lacson were to harp upon after the election of Magsaysay.

The result of 1953 Presidential elections was expected – Magsaysay garnered 2,912,922 votes against Quirino’s 1,313,991 votes. The NP made a clean sweep in 48 provinces;
the Ilocano region comprising Abra, Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur and La Union voted LP. Twenty-five of the 28 chartered cities went Nacionalista. The Liberals won in 217 out of 1236 towns and municipal districts.

Five Nacionalistas - Eulogio Rodriguez, Edmuno Cea, Mariano Cuenco, Emmanuel Pelaez and Alejo Mabanag - were elected to the Senate - giving the opposition control of upper chamber of the Legislature; in the House of the Representatives there were 58 Nacionalistas and 31 Liberals.

Gracefully acknowledging defeat, Quirino delivered his last radio chat from Malacañang on 16 December 1953. It was his 62nd “fireside chat”; a large crowd of well-wishers filled the palace dining room.

His farewell speech was a distillation of the philosophy he had personally nurtured during a life-long career of public service and political leadership. He rebuked the “nationalism” of the Filipino elite whom he accused of collaborating with a foreign espionage agency, the CIA in order to dispose political enemy - in effect, throwing out the baby (democracy) with the polluted bath-water (politics).

“By a fluke of destiny,” Quirino said in his farewell address, “we have developed special relations with the West, particularly with the United States. We are not indifferent to its advantages. But over and above such advantages, there must remain the primacy of our nation’s integrity. We should never again be, in form or essence, a dependency of any foreign power.”

Apparently referring to the role of dummy which the United States appeared to have carved for the Philippines, especially in Asia, Quirino continued:

“Our country cannot presume to undertake the salvation of Asia and the world. But it can attend to its own development and arrest the growing apprehension of personal insecurity as an aftermath of past political conflicts, in order to reduce its internal tensions on which communism thrives.

“I now beg beloved country men to take my leave. In endeavoring to serve your interest, I have given you the best that it is in me; at this hour may I add the kindness of my thoughts. God guide the new administration and preserve the Republic.”

Was Quirino laying the basis for a reassessment of the Philippine position in the region when he affirmed that “we cannot presume to undertake the salvation of Asia and of the world”? Or, was he laying a new basis for the alignment of newly-independent states which the US Cold War propaganda was accusing of deviating from the democratic path and turning “communist”? Had he a clear presentiment of the difficulty, not to speak of the disdain and contempt, which Philippine identification with the US position on virtually all issues was provoking in the international community?

Quirino told newsmen after his radio chat that in retirement he would write his memoirs. “I might even become a poet,” he said in jest.

In his Novaliches retreat, Quirino did succeed in writing a fragment of his memoirs. Most of it, however, dealt with issues and episodes which had contemporaneous relevance of current events. He ignored the more profound dimension of his involvement in public affairs, such as his personal participation in the untangling of Philippine politics from
the strangle-hold of US neo-colonialism. The brief remarks in his 1953 final chat, therefore, should suffice to show his concern to safeguard the independence and sovereignty of the Philippines.

Nobody was better qualified than president Quirino to assess the meaning and direction of Philippine-US relations. He was a product of the educational system established by America in the Philippines, and began his public career under the close supervision of American colonial officials. He served in the Philippine Commission, the political body that administered the transfer of political power and responsibility to Filipinos. Later, Quirino was to become a member of the legislative body envisioned by the Commission to initiate the process and enlarge the scope of self-government.

During the period of transition Quirino served in vital cabinet positions. Despite his lack of formal training in finance, he had invariably been given responsibilities related to financial and economic administration. Quirino thus participated directly, perhaps even more than Quezon, in the work of establishing the physical and institutional infrastructure of self-government and eventual independence.

History has been rather perfunctory in recording the participation of Filipinos in the various independence missions to Washington D.C. other than the central figures of Quezon, Osmeña, and Roxas. Quirino, however, served in the important mission which negotiated the terms of independence - the mission headed by Quezon to rectify the short coming of Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act.

Again there appears to be some carelessness in the assessment of the Tydings-McDuffie Law which in effect replaced the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act. The near universal judgment is that the latter did not bear any significant difference from the former law, that its importance was merely “political” in the sense that it tended to upstage the labor of the OsRox law mission, in effect made Quezon appear sole hero of the struggle for independence. The traditional view that the Tydings-McDuffie law was substantially the same as the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act.

The significant difference, namely, that the status of US Naval and Military bases and reservations would become negotiable, rather than a fait accompli, after the Philippines achieve independence in 1946 was de-emphasized. Events have in fact shown this perception to be essentially correct. Philippine-US negotiations on the bases could conceivably continue through 1991 to 1992 when the existing agreement covering them is expected to expire, or quite possibly through the last decade of the century, or even beyond because of changes in the national or international environment or in the terms and agreement of the revised agreement.

As Quezon narrated the details of their mission in The Good Fight, the Filipino delegation had been treated coldly by both the White House and by the Congress, neither of which showed any special concern for Philippine independence.

Consequently, on the eve of the departure of the mission for Manila, Quezon had asked the small group to sit down to a dinner of home-cooked Filipino food, prepared by the wives of the members of the delegation. The group was about to sit down to dinner in Quezon’s private suite at the Waldorf-Astoria when the telephone rang.

It was Quirino. He had gone to make a desperate last follow-
up of the delegation’s lobby in the Congress, and it appeared that at the last minute the approval of the Tydings-McDuffie independence bill had suddenly become imminent. It was in fact approved, with Quirino as part of the Filipino lobby in congress.

It was logical, therefore, after the war that Quirino should stand up to US Ambassador Paul McNutt precisely on the terms of the Tydings-McDuffie Act. Without Quirino’s stubborn and principled stand, the US naval and military reservations would have included significant portions of the capital region, including large areas of Manila, instead of being confined to Clark, Subic and Sangley Point. Quirino’s role in defining the scope and limits of those reservations was acknowledge by Claro M. Recto himself in the course of a speech devoted to a criticism of the Quirino administration. Even as he bitterly denounced the President, Recto paid due homage to the patriotism of Quirino.

Quirino had been excessively modest about his role in the negotiations on the military bases. By his own account, the capitulationist stance of Roxas to American demands was part of an act agreed between them – that while Roxas would appear inclined to accept US demands, Quirino as Vice-President and Secretary of Foreign Affairs was to take on the role of tough and recalcitrant negotiator. We do not know how much of this narrative is self-effacement, and how much a part of an enduring loyalty to Roxas who had been a close friend of Quirino since their high school days. Quirino had made these self-deprecatory statements as President, when Roxas was dead and, therefore, no longer needed fulsome praise for him.

Be that as it may, Quirino’s remark in his farewell radio chat could not have been a sort of “sour-grapes” reaction following his defeat in an election largely manipulated by US advisers and subsidized by American resources.

Speaking of the background and training of Presidents, it could well be said of Quirino that he was admirably, even extra-ordinarily well prepared for the office.

Most of Philippine presidents were catapulted to power by certain quirks or twists of history – in other words, by accident or chance.

Quirino’s rise to power was painfully slow, but steady. The whole span of the US colonial period up to the Japanese occupation and the end of World War II in 1946 served as the historical backdrop of his long and slow ascent from lowly property officer at the Manila Police department, through tedious levels of bureaucracy, to the very pinnacle, in Malacañang. True, there are other qualities of leadership sometimes more crucial than the accumulated experience of performing various public responsibilities. Yet, certainly, Quirino’s experience with the work of the Philippine Commission, with finance and economic management, with local government, and with the educational system, first as a poorly paid barrio school teacher, much later as member of the Board of Regents of the University of the Philippines – not to speak of presiding over various congressional committees – must have resulted in an accretion of values and insights, knowledge and experience of enormous value for a President of the Republic.

Not having passed through a period of monarchical rule and not having produced an indigenous aristocracy, our concept of leadership as defined by a democratic constitution makes no extraordinary demands and requires no special qualities
of those aspiring for it, other than the legal requirements of being able to make use of the franchise and being exempt from legal disabilities. Thus, it may indeed be said that the assumption of political power entails no special equipment except the capacity of the aspirant to win an honest election. Special qualities, gifts and skills are admired in a leader, but these are sort of value-added tax imposed on him, not something explicitly demanded.

This is not meant to underline the bankruptcy and retrograde political leadership which besets our country in the Year of Our Lord 1990. Winning the people’s trust entails possession of qualities other than sympathy or personal charisma. It calls for the capacity to inspire confidence in one’s intellectual honesty and moral fortitude – qualities which even the most vilified of our Presidents could not be said to lack completely.

It was the special quality of Quirino that, apart from the purely legal and democratic requirements of leadership, he also possessed the training, skills and bureaucracy experience of management. At a time when political patronage was necessary in public office it was Quirino’s exceptional privilege to have been recruited to the civil service and to positions in the highest echelons of government on the basis of his formal training and special competence. He brought to the presidency not only innate rare gifts of heart and mind but also skills honed by long training and broad experience.

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While Vice-President, and afterwards as President, whenever he could get away from the pressure of official duty, Quirino loved to take a cruise and go fishing. Whenever he had an official engagement in the Visayas or Mindanao, he would sail on the official yacht and in the process convert a routine voyage into a pleasure trip.

In one such trip, Cabili showed him a beautiful island and offered it to him, saying that it was being offered for sale. Quirino admired the island and he thought it would be a haven for his retirement. But he quickly dismissed the idea and gave it no further thought. When his wife was still alive, they have thought of retiring in Switzerland; in one of his trips abroad, he had indeed seen the very place he would have wanted to acquire.

“But it is too far,” he told Cabili.

As a matter of necessity and principle, Quirino never made any large-scale acquisitions of real estate while he held public office. His government salary had always been meager, and he died virtually a poor man. His wife, however, was rich and Quirino kept her share of the family estate intact for their children. He used to reassure his daughter Vicky as a young girl living with him in Malacañang, that her future was provided for despite his meager income because of her mother’s wealth.

Shortly after the Second World War, following the sale of the Perez-Samanillo building in Escolta, Manila whose owners were his clients, Quirino received a substantial commission. With the money Quirino brought a tract of land in Novaliches, Quezon City (12 hectares), close to Jesuit Novitiate. The piece of real estate had belonged to Dr. Nicanor Jacinto who now offered it to him to show his family’s appreciation for Quirino’s help when they were trying to develop their steel mill. Quirino insisted on paying a price based on real estate values prevailing at the time. The property was still a wilderness, but Quirino liked the view it commanded, which
included the large lake of La Mesa Dam.

The property, however, been neglected and allowed to go to seed until Quirino began to make plans for his retirement following the 1953 elections.

Immediately, he developed the property. He had a small cottage built for himself, then added a wing for Vicky and her children.

The Novaliches property was still a shambles of construction and improvement when Quirino went to live there in 1954.

Towards December 30, 1953 the preparations for Magsaysay’s inauguration were completed. Protocol dictated that the incoming president go to Malacañang and, together with the outgoing president, proceed to the Luneta grandstand. This had been the precedent set by inaugural ritual. But because of the acrimonious election campaign, Magsaysay feared that a meeting with Quirino may revive recriminations and turn it into a heated confrontation. Quirino, a product of an older world and a stickler of propriety, made it known that he would not attend the inaugural ceremony if Magsaysay did not go to Malacañang to fetch him. In that event, he would simply leave Malacañang and drive directly to Novaliches.

Quirino named his Novaliches residence the Hilltop, located on a rise in an expanse of rolling terrain. Here he tried to observe a more sedate routine. However, the task he set for himself of writing his memoirs and developing the residential area perpetually excited him. Juan Collas, a former classmate, and Federico Mangahas, both former newspapermen, were doing the research for his memoirs. A newspaperman who interviewed Quirino in 1954 noted his vigor and robust condition. “You know,” Quirino told him, “when I campaigned, I was a sick man.” It was the need to work and to be in his toes that propped up his health. He wanted to survive and he willed it.

He took pride in his property, the first important property he ever permitted himself to buy. He would plant fruit trees and set up an aviary. He had received as gifts a few rare birds, but when he moved to Novaliches there were not enough of them to warrant the construction of an aviary.

Quirino was enjoying his new-found leisure. When Roxas suddenly died of cardiac failure, Quirino himself was nursing a mild heart attack. Ever since his student days when he had to work, Quirino had not known an extended period of rest.
In February 1956, Magsaysay called to ask if he could visit the former President.

On the afternoon of February 26, Magsaysay motored to the Hilltop, accompanied by Dindo Gonzalez. Quirino offered them merienda. Magsaysay explained that he had come to ask for help. His administration, he told Quirino, was facing serious problems. The people who had initially endorsed his candidacy, particularly Recto, Laurel and Lacson, had turned against him. Magsaysay confided that he was not too happy with his cabinet. He asked for advice.

On February 29, Quirino rose early. He was in a light mood throughout the day, reminiscing about the years in Malacañang, about people and friends. As he stood to go to his room after lunch, Vicky kissed him before his siesta. After his siesta he was getting dressed. He collapsed in his bathroom. Vicky heard Quirino’s valet for help. Vicky rushed back only to see him slumped on the floor. They carried him to his bed and tried to call for a doctor. He had suffered a massive heart attack and never recovered consciousness. Vicky called up Malacañang. Magsaysay arrived within a few minutes.

Magsaysay went to the room where Quirino had been laid. After necrological services in Malacañang, his remains were brought for burial at the South Cemetery in Makati near the graves of his wife and children.

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In the year 1990, 36 years after his death, and on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of his birth, (November 16, 1990) it should be possible to examine objectively the life and career of President Elpidio Quirino, identify his contributions to the country’s well-being, progress and development, and determine his standing among the makers of Philippine history and the benefactors of the Filipino people.

Elpidio Quirino as President suffered from the unavoidable handicap of assuming office immediately after Manuel L. Quezon and Manuel Roxas who overshadowed him in verbal eloquence and political charisma. His achievements lay in areas that very rarely arouse raving encomiums in newspaper columns or on the floor of Congress, but stand top most in terms of national development.

For example, he was the first President to propose industrialization as the basic strategy for progress and development, not in high-sounding generalities calculated to impress people but in terms of a concrete program of action which included the following: construction of hydroelectric plants in Luzon such as the Ambuklao Dam; electric and fertilizer plants at the Maria Christina Falls in Mindanao; irrigation projects at the basins of the Agno and Pampanga rivers; and land distribution and settlement in Isabela, Cotabato, Bukidnon and Lanao.

Less impressive perhaps, but closer to the daily needs and aspiration of the common man were the adoption of the Minimum Wage Law, the amendment of the Women’s Compensation Project Act and the 8-hour Law to facilitate enforcement, and housing projects in Quezon City for low-salaried public and private sector employees.

He strove to rectify the serious imbalance in the trade between the Philippines and the United States by imposing import controls, a radical measure which drove an American diplomat to make the arrogant and cynical comment: “The trouble with Quirino is that his taking Philippine Independence
too seriously.” No Filipino President could wish or hope for a higher compliment than this.

He did not wake up one morning to find himself in the pinnacle of power. He rose step by slow step from the lowest rung, and from this experience developed a degree of competence that was envy of many and the reward of but a few.

His political career was not all moonlight and roses – far from it. The 1949 elections were denounced as “the dirtiest elections of Philippine history”, and the claim that both sides were guilty of graft and corruption cannot extenuate the offense. It must have saddened him, but in the moral context at that time rather less than it should. His administration was racked by bitter partisan politics, and graft and corruption was – as it still is – the accepted black currency of political life.

Elpidio Quirino never forgot his humble origins. The cause of the poor, the humble and the oppressed was to him the commitment of the lifetime.

He died a man of modest means, having avoided the unprincipled use of power to amass the perquisites of wealth and privilege for selfish ends.

While he enjoyed the rewards and satisfactions of a good life, an innate sense of morality and decency preserved him from the sins of pride, greed and selfish interest. He cherished and practised the tenets of official justice and equity but not at the expense of individual rights, integrity and self-respect.

Although he was the object of persistent and unrelenting press criticism during his term as president, he never wavered in his respect for freedom of the press.

He remained unfazed by the malicious attempt of his enemies to impeach him, being the only President thus far to be subjected to such an act of political vindictiveness, and to win complete vindication in the end.

With great skill he combined the qualities of political aplomb and diplomatic savoir faire, harnessing both to the advancement of the national interest.

He was an intrepid nationalist committed heart and soul for the defense of his country and the advancement of the national welfare, whatever the cost.

He favored the improvement of the life and welfare of the poor, the unprivileged, and the oppressed through peaceful reform, not by violent revolution.

He initiated the policy of establishing more equitable and just relations between the Philippines and the United States, without subservience or domination.

Although the Philippines during his time was almost entirely dependent on the United States, he realized the need to initiate or develop relations with other countries, especially in Europe. As original proponent of the Asia-Pacific movement he foreshadowed the emergence of the Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

With the passage of time, Elpidio Quirino stands taller still in the Pantheon of Filipino Presidents. On the occasion of his centenary, he deserves to be enshrined in the hearts of the
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Prof. Petronilo Bn. Daroy was responsible for organizing and undertaking the research and interviews essential to the achievement of this task. Needless to say, the Quirino biography “Apo Lakay” written and published by Carlos Quirino in 1987 was a major pioneering effort which has placed all subsequent biographers in his debt.

- The Author

Filipino people not only as the outstanding First Diplomat and eminent Second President of the Republic of Philippines but, in the sober judgment of many, as the greatest and the best.
Salvador P. Lopez, columnist, magazine editor and associate editor of the Philippines Herald (1933-41) wrote his first book “Literature and Society” which won the first Literary Award established in 1941 by President Quezon. Following the Japanese invasion on December 8 that year, Lopez joined the USAFFE in Corregidor where he was commissioned 1st Lieutenant on the staff of General Douglas MacArthur. He wrote for the Voice of Freedom the announcement of the Fall of Bataan. A few days before the enemy captured the island bastion, he was ordered to take the last plane out of Corregidor bound for Mindanao where he served as aide to General Manuel Roxas. After independence in July 1946, he joined the diplomatic service as deputy to Dr. Carlos P. Romulo in the United Nations. He was later named ambassador to France, Undersecretary and later Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Permanent Representative to the U.N., and concurrently ambassador to the United States. In 1969 he returned to serve as President of the University of the Philippines until 1975 when he retired to write his memoirs while teaching part-time and growing orchids. Called in 1986 to represent the Philippines in the U.N. once more, he returned in 1988 to serve concurrently as ambassador in the Department of Foreign Affairs and consultant in the Office of the Vice President of the Philippines. He resigned as ambassador in 1989 but continues as consultant in the OVP. His published works include: “Freedom of Information” (1953), “Human Rights and Constitution” (1970), “The Philippines Under Martial Law” (1974), “New Directions in Philippine Foreign Policy” (1975), Editor, “The Philippines in the 21st Century – A Future Studies Symposium” (1978), “Aspects of International Intellectual Cooperation” prepared at the behest of the United Nations University in Tokyo (1980), and “Isles of Gold – A History of Mining in the Philippines” (1990).
With the passage of time, Elpidio Quirino stands taller still in the Pantheon of Filipino Presidents. On the occasion of his centenary, he deserves to be enshrined in the hearts of the Filipino people not only as the outstanding First Diplomat and eminent Second President of the Republic of the Philippines but, in the sober judgement of many, as the greatest and the best.

–Salvador P. Lopez