

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

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Philippine Studies vol. 20, no. 2 (1972): 323–341

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Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Review Article

Quezon and Magsaysay

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

TO compare Magsaysay with Quezon may sound fantastic: no two men could be farther apart in character and outlook. Yet, despite the obvious contrasts, there were striking similarities between these two men who both became Presidents: Quezon of the Commonwealth, Magsaysay of the Republic. Both were charismatic figures; both enjoyed extraordinary popularity; both died in office; and both had strong characters (with explosive tempers) which have left an imprint upon Philippine life and politics. An opportunity to explore these similarities and contrasts is offered by an unusual coincidence: the publication within a few months of each other of several books in which the life and times of one or other of these two men are discussed.

One is a biography of Quezon by Carlos Quirino, former Director of the National Library.¹ This should be compared not only with Quezon's own autobiography published two decades earlier,² but also with the more recent two-volume bio-

¹ *Quezon, Paladin of Philippine Freedom*, by Carlos Quirino, with an Introduction by Alejandro R. Roces, Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1971, Pp. xvi, 419 (with index, 17 photographs).

² Manuel L. Quezon, *The Good Fight*. New York, 1944.

graphy of Sergio Osmeña by Vicente Albano Pacis.³ As for Magsaysay, there is an excellent "political biography" by Dr. Jose Abueva of the University of the Philippines,⁴ which however should be supplemented by the personal memoirs of Colonel (afterwards Major General) Edward Lansdale, who was as close to Magsaysay as he was later to become to Ngo Dinh Diem.⁵

I

Quezon and Magsaysay came to the presidency by different routes: Quezon after a lifelong political career, Magsaysay after only the briefest acquaintance with it. The two men lived in the presidential palace of Malacañang in ways which could not have been more unlike. Their life-styles were different; Quezon was the aristocrat, Magsaysay the proletarian. Yet Quezon's origins were no more aristocratic than Magsaysay's were proletarian. Both in fact had very similar beginnings. They were both country boys, born into families of very modest means, their parents being impoverished landowners of the lower middle class.

Manuel Luis Quezon was born in 1878 in Baler, Tayabas, a remote town on the eastern coast of Luzon. When he was eleven years old he was brought to Manila to study as a working student at the Dominican College of San Juan de Letrán. He lived in poor circumstances, but he did get a classical education, and learned to speak and write Spanish fluently—an accomplishment which Magsaysay never had. After five years at Letrán where he completed the baccalaureate, Quezon be-

³ *President Sergio Osmeña: a fully documented biography*, by Vicente Albano Pacis. 2 Volumes. Manila, 1971. Published jointly by the Philippine Constitution Association; Araneta University Research Foundation; President Sergio Osmeña Memorial Foundation, Inc.

⁴ *Ramon Magsaysay, A Political Biography*, by Jose V. Abueva. Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1971. Pp. (xvi), 496 (with index, 8 pages of photographs).

⁵ *In the Midst of Wars, An American's Mission to Southeast Asia*, by Edward Geary Lansdale. New York: Harper and Row, 1972. Pp. xii, 386 (with index, 2 maps, 16 pages of photographs).

gan the study of law in 1894; but his studies were interrupted by the Revolution. Returning to Baler, he became an officer in the revolutionary army, first in his home province of Tayabas, and later in Bataan on the opposite coast.

After the return of peace, Quezon completed his study of law and began a legal practice in his home province which soon brought him into collision with American businessmen. His fearless (and successful) exposure of one of them caught the attention, not only of the Filipino residents of the area but also of the more fair-minded American administrators, who obtained for him an assignment as provincial fiscal in Mindoro. In that capacity he again clashed with Americans whose enmity could have ruined his career. Fortunately for him, he was saved by being elected provincial governor of Tayabas in 1905. Two years later he resigned from the governorship and was elected representative from the first district of Tayabas in the First Philippine Assembly. Quezon was then only twenty-nine years old. He was not yet a national figure. By contrast, his contemporary, the young Sergio Osmeña who had also been governor of Cebu and had edited a newspaper, was catapulted to national prominence by being elected Speaker of the First Philippine Assembly. For the next forty years, Philippine politics would be dominated by these two men who sometimes worked together, and sometimes were (politically) at each others' throats.

Quezon became a national figure with enormous popularity during his eight-year term of office (1909-1917) as one of the two Resident Commissioners for the Philippines in Washington, who had a voice (but not a vote) in the deliberations of the American Congress. By his efforts, Quezon brought about the passage in 1916 of the Jones Law (named after its sponsor, William Atkinson Jones, Congressman from Virginia), which granted a large measure of autonomy to the Philippine Islands, and which included a preamble in which was expressed the American intention of eventually granting complete independence to the Philippines. The passage of that bill, and its signing into law by President Wilson, was hailed in the Philippines with jubilant enthusiasm, and Quezon returned to Manila, where he received a hero's welcome that has never been

paralleled—except perhaps by the outpouring of popular affection at Magsaysay's presidential inauguration thirty-seven years later.

The appointment of Francis Burton Harrison (handpicked by Quezon himself) as Governor General of the Philippines, enabled the Filipinos to attain a far greater measure of autonomy than had been envisioned by the Jones Law. By the terms of that law, a bicameral Legislature was created, composed of a Senate and a House of Representatives. Quezon became President of the Senate, while Osmeña remained for a while Speaker of the House. These two national leaders were in effect coopted into the Executive Branch of the Government by Harrison when he created a Council of State which included not only the Cabinet but also the two leaders of the Legislature. As by the terms of the Jones Law, all the Cabinet Secretaries were Filipinos (except the Secretary of Public Instruction), this meant in effect that the country was governed by an all-Filipino Legislature and an Executive Branch that was overwhelmingly Filipino.

The victory of the Republicans over the Democrats in the American congressional elections of 1918 and in the presidential elections of 1920, brought about a drastic change in American policy towards the Philippines. One aspect of this change was the replacement of the complaisant Harrison by Major General Leonard Wood as Governor General. Leonard Wood had served in the Philippines as a remarkably successful governor of the Muslim provinces in Mindanao, and had subsequently been appointed Chief of Staff in Washington and had served under Pershing in World War I. Despite his military status, he was the favorite candidate of many Republicans for the presidency of the United States. In the Republican Convention of 1920 he took an early lead, losing to Harding only after several ballots.

There was no question of Leonard Wood's honesty, integrity and competence: but he was no politician—and a politician was needed to govern the Islands after Harrison. Governor Wood saw that his predecessor had left the Islands (and

particularly the government finances) "in a mess." He set about to remedy the situation with an iron hand—resulting in a head-on collision with Senate-President Quezon. It was at this time that Quezon made his famous statement, that he would rather live in hell run by Filipinos, than in heaven run by Americans. The feud between Quezon and Wood was ended only by Leonard Wood's death in 1927.

While this prolonged feud brought out many of Quezon's sterling qualities, it also manifested the streak of ruthlessness that he was to show again and again in later years. Because General Emilio Aguinaldo had sided with Wood, Aguinaldo had to be destroyed.

Later, when Sergio Osmeña and Manuel Roxas, as heads of the so-called "Os-Rox Independence Mission," succeeded in obtaining from the United States Congress the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Bill (granting Independence to the Philippines after a period of transition), Quezon made every effort to prevent their returning to the Philippines and being given the same heroes' welcome that he himself had been given after the passage of the Jones Law. First, he telegraphed them to come home to the Philippines before the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Bill could be passed. When they refused, Quezon began to find fault with the Bill. When it was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Hoover, Quezon wired Osmeña and Roxas not to return to Manila (where a heroes' welcome was awaiting them) but to meet him in Paris: from there they would return together. After their return, Quezon worked for the destruction of Osmeña and Roxas. Osmeña (who had by then become a Senator) was stripped of his committee chairmanships. Roxas (who had become Speaker of the House through Quezon's own efforts) was stripped of his speakership. The country was divided into "Pro" and "Con." But sensing that the country would vote "Pro" (in favor of accepting the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Independence Act) if it were put to a popular plebiscite, Quezon maneuvered to have the Act rejected by the Philippine Legislature itself. He then went to the United States himself and (under the more favorable circumstances of a Democrat Congress and the administration of President

Franklin D. Roosevelt), Quezon brought about the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, which some observers have described as not substantially different from the Hare-Hawes-Cutting which Quezon had rejected. The main difference was that Quezon brought about its passage, and came home to another hero's welcome.

Carried by the momentum of that welcome, Quezon was elected President of the Philippines Commonwealth, which was to be the transitional structure before full independence was to be granted in 1946. Osmeña had to be content with being Vice-President.

II

The hectic but brilliant career in politics, the heady success, the enormous popularity, the sense of power, the control over patronage, the maneuverings for political control—all took a toll on President Quezon. Physically, he suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis and had to make extended visits (lasting months at a time) to an American sanatorium. Morally, the toll was even greater. Quezon brought to the Philippine scene a brand of politics from which the country has never recovered. The personal rule, the explosive temper, the ruthlessness against one's opponents, the colossal egoism, the junketings at public expense, the nightclubbings and similar practices—all have become standard parts of the Philippine political scene. There may have been a personal bias—and on the other hand, there may have been some truth—in the character estimates that a former Governor General, William Cameron Forbes, made of the Filipino leaders of the time. Osmeña (said Forbes) was “straight as a die”; Aguinaldo was “very straight”; but Quezon “is probably the most unscrupulous little person in the world.” Forbes went into detail in his character appraisal of Quezon in a passage quoted by Quirino:

He has a good deal of heart. It grieves him frightfully to lose the friendship of anybody. Wants to be friends, but has not enough staunchness of character to stick by his friends. . . . Will knife you in the back, but can be made extremely useful because he can get things done. The danger of using him is that each time you do so, you add

to his power, which is a great power for evil as well as good. I think it unwise to bring on a fight with him...

It is necessary, if history is to be honest, to face Quezon's weaknesses squarely. It is also necessary to recognize his virtues, and they were many. To mention only two: first and foremost was his national pride as a Filipino—a pride all the more remarkable (and necessary) at a time when Filipinos were treated by American administrators as an inferior race. Second (belatedly perhaps, and not altogether clearly), Quezon began to see in his time what we now see more clearly in ours: the need for social justice and agrarian reform.

There was an incident (of which this reviewer was a witness, and not mentioned in Quirino's biography) which might perhaps be pin-pointed as the beginning of Quezon's interest in the plight of the tenants (the *kasama*) in Central Luzon. For several years during the late 1930's and early 1940's, one of the professors at the Ateneo de Manila, Father Joseph Mulry, S.J., had been endeavoring to instill in his students and in others a vivid realization of the plight of tenant-farmers and factory workers, and of the need for social justice. Out of these endeavors came various projects: the Bellarmine Guild, the Chesterton Evidence Guild, the Commonweal Hour, the publication called *The Answer*, the Back-to-the-Land movement, etc. Mulry was a professor of literature: but he managed in his literary classes to exude a reverence for liturgy and a desire for social justice. One of the many students thus inspired by Mulry's ideas was a young man called Raul Manglapus, who in an oratorical competition among law students sponsored by the Civil Liberties Union, delivered a remarkable speech about the plight of the small farmer, a victim to usury and to social injustice. Manglapus did not win the competition. The first prize went to another Ateneo graduate who was representing the Santo Tomas Law School. But President Quezon, who had been listening to the speeches as Guest of Honor, had been struck by Manglapus' address. A few days later, Quezon sent for the young orator and his tutor, Father Mulry. In a private ceremony at Malacañang, Quezon gave Manglapus his own personal award for what Quezon considered had been the most

significant speech in the contest. Quezon had obviously been impressed by the picture which Manglapus had drawn of the plight of the *kasama*, as well as of the urgency of the problems. Unfortunately, before a systematic program of social and agrarian reform could be instituted, the Philippines was deluged in war by the Japanese invasion.

III

Quezon had been helped in his political career by his membership in a powerful fraternity, the Freemasons, in which he rose to the Thirty-second Degree. But having achieved political power (prior to his becoming President of the Commonwealth) he signed a document of retraction and returned to the Catholic Church. In the anti-clerical atmosphere of the 1930's, Quezon's move may have shocked many of his American friends; which may be the reason why he took the trouble to explain his action to one of them in a passage also quoted by Quirino:

I have (re)joined the Catholic Church because I simply got to the point where I felt the need of professing a religion, and in making my choice I chose the one that was the religion of my parents, as it is the religion of my wife and children, when I found, as I did find, that I could honestly and sincerely believe in its teachings Since certain Masonic practices are inconsistent with certain Catholic dogmas, I simply had to give up Masonry.

Quezon's action, coupled with other factors, served to loosen the strangle-hold that Masonry had upon Philippine public life, especially in the public school system, the judiciary, the army, and the civil service generally.

Although Director Quirino's biography is reticent on the subject, future biographers must assess the influence upon Quezon of his exemplary wife, Doña Aurora Aragon de Quezon. Hers was a hidden influence, exercised not through political meddling, but through personal example and prayer.

Having returned to the Church, it was as a practicing Catholic that Quezon was elected to the presidency in 1935. He brought the Mass back to Malacañang Palace, and in 1937,

on the occasion of the Thirty-third International Eucharistic Congress, he offered the hospitality of the presidential residence to the Papal Legate-a-latere, Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia. This gesture was appreciated by the Catholics of the Philippines (who constitute over 80 per cent of the population) but it was apparently not appreciated in Washington, and President Quezon had to go on a foreign tour (reportedly on orders from Washington) in order not to be on hand to welcome in person the Papal Legate. What a world of difference between the anti-clerical days of Quezon, and the easy camaraderie with churchmen shown by Presidents Quirino, Magsaysay, Garcia, and their successors!

This was only one of many reminders of the fact that in 1937, although the Philippines was a Commonwealth governed by a Filipino President and a Filipino Congress, it was nevertheless not an independent country and its autonomy was far from complete. It was not only in matters of religion but in other matters as well that Quezon found occasion to quarrel publicly with the American High Commissioner.

IV

The Japanese invasion, and Quezon's subsequent escape from Corregidor to the United States (via the Visayas, Mindanao and Australia), brought an ambiguous end to President Quezon's colorful political career. He had begun his term as President in 1935 and had been reelected in 1939. According to the Constitution his second term as President should have ended after eight years in office, namely in 1943. Vice-President Sergio Osmeña would automatically become President after that date. But President Quezon refused to give up the presidency, causing an embarrassing situation among the Filipinos in the United States. One person connected with the Philippine government-in-exile told this reviewer that in Washington it was a common practice for Filipinos to prepare and keep in their pockets two different memoranda, one favoring Quezon's retention, another Osmeña's accession. They would pull out the appropriate memorandum in the presence of Osmeña's advocates, or of Quezon's.

The embarrassing situation ended with President Quezon's death at Saranac Lake in August 1944 and it was President Osmeña who returned with MacArthur to a liberated Philippines later that year. After the war Quezon's body was brought back to the Philippines, accompanied by his war-time chaplain, Father Pacifico Ortiz S.J. The number of places named after Quezon attests to the veneration and affection in which he is still held: there is a Quezon City, a Quezon Province, a Quezon Bridge in Manila, a Quezon street or park in many towns. The chief hospital for tubercular patients is called the Quezon Institute, and many towns in many provinces are named Quezon. Yet it might have served Quezon's memory better if his family and friends had opposed the renaming of his native province of Tayabas into Quezon Province. After all, Quezon is sufficiently honored elsewhere. Tayabas has a long and honorable history, and Quezon began his public career as Governor of Tayabas. Would he have been pleased if he had foreseen that that noble province would one day lose its identity and acquire a new name even if it were his own?

V

In 1907, when Quezon was leaving the Tayabas governorship to become a member of the First Philippine Assembly, Ramon Magsaysay was born in a remote town of Zambales, on the opposite side of Luzon Island from Quezon's birthplace. Like Quezon (and like many Filipinos who attained national prominence—including Rizal) Magsaysay was of mixed blood: Spanish, Chinese, Malayan. Also, like Quezon, Magsaysay was born into a humble but respected landholding family of very modest means. Magsaysay, however, was not without powerful connections: he had some well-to-do cousins, and one of his brothers-in-law was to become an associate justice of the Supreme Court. Like Quezon, Magsaysay was born into a Tagalog-speaking family, but Magsaysay also spoke Ilocano, for Zambales is bilingual. Unlike Quezon, Magsaysay never learned to speak Spanish fluently. He never had the advantages of a classical education in Manila which Quezon (or his own cousins) had. But he did learn English in the local schools

which he attended. In this he had the advantage over Quezon who had to learn the language by private study.

Magsaysay's academic training was minimal. Graduated from a local high school in Zambales, he enrolled in the University of the Philippines where he did not crown himself with glory. He dropped out after one year of college to pursue a less exacting program elsewhere. He eventually obtained a bachelor's degree in commerce, and then applied for work as a mechanic in a transport company owned by some relatives. He began at the bottom, earning ₱35 a month, gradually increasing his salary until by 1933 he was receiving ₱200 a month. It was at this time that he married Miss Luz Banzon, and was able to build for her a modest house in a quiet street in the Singalong district of Manila.

Thus, both by native bent and by training, Magsaysay was no intellectual. Academic theories bored him (or perhaps he did not understand them). He was a mechanic, at home with the engines of trucks and buses. But he also learned something else: he learned to deal with people; not the penniless, landless proletariat, but the hard-working, self-supporting people of humble means—the bus drivers, ticket collectors, mechanics and other personnel of a company that provided cheap transport between Manila and Zambales.

This fact is important to grasp. Later, Magsaysay was to acquire an image as the champion of the masses, as an advocate of "land for the landless". Actually, the masses of which he was the champion were not penniless mendicants, or social parasites, or those who "squatted" on other peoples' lands. Magsaysay's "masses" were the hard-working, self-respecting, simple and honest poor. To speak in sociological categories, Magsaysay's thinking was that of the lower middle class. This is an important class in the nation. To it belong the thousands of poorly-paid government clerks, public school teachers, policemen, firemen, taxi drivers, market vendors.

This was a class of people whose point of view Quezon (despite his humble beginnings) had neither shared nor understood. It was not his fault: from an impecunious childhood,

Quezon had been catapulted by the march of events to a position of great power and wealth. Quezon thus came to belong to the aristocracy of the land, and he viewed things from the point of view of that aristocracy. There was much merit in that point-of-view. Under the circumstances, when Filipinos had to fight against the condescensions of colonial rule, it was necessary to assert not only equality, but even a cultural superiority over the American masters. This was perhaps Quezon's most important contribution to Philippine progress: he pierced the armor of American condescension and forced them to recognize Filipinos as equals.

That was Quezon's contribution. Magsaysay's was different. He brought to Philippine politics the small man's point-of-view. (He understood, for instance, the need for water, for artesian wells.)

Unfortunately, Magsaysay had to depend on ghost-writers for his major pronouncements, and one of the things that they wrote for him was a Creed that included the tenet: "Those who have less in life should have more in law." That was very neatly put, but it was open to misunderstanding: as if Magsaysay were advocating, not equal justice for all, but a lopsided kind of justice that favored the poor against the rich. Understood in this sense, the cleverly worded tenet was a bit of sentimental nonsense that could have pernicious effects.

VI

Had the Japanese invasion not occurred, Magsaysay would have spent the rest of his life as an obscure employee of a transport company, first as mechanic, then as local manager in Zambales. He was in this latter situation when the Japanese invaded the Philippines; and although he spent the first years of the war quietly with his family in Manila, it was his connection with a bus line that made him useful to the guerrillas in the concluding months of the war. When the American forces returned in 1945, they appointed Magsaysay military governor of Zambales. That was his introduction to public life.

The taste of public life was heady. A year later, the first post-war elections of April 1946 found Magsaysay one of six candidates to represent Zambales in the new Congress of the Philippine Republic that was to be inaugurated in July. Aided by his guerrilla organization and campaigning in almost every town and barrio, Magsaysay won a modest victory, garnering 38 per cent of the votes with a comfortable margin over his five rivals.

The fact that he had been a guerrilla leader during the war won for him a seat in the congressional committee for the armed forces, eventually becoming its chairman. This gave him a double opportunity to win national recognition on a modest scale: one was his controversy with General Castañeda over the conduct of the armed forces; another was his trip to Washington (his first outside the country) to help negotiate American payment of war-claims to help the armed forces.

VII

The three years from 1949 to 1951 were among the most depressing periods of Philippine history. The entire country was demoralized. The Huks were in open rebellion. Brigandage was rampant. The country was still suffering from the ravages of the war. Graft and corruption in the government seemed unchecked. And the country was governed by an administration (headed by President Quirino) which had won reelection in 1949 by means which many people believed to have been fraudulent. (Many bona-fide voters had been prevented from voting by armed goons, and on the other hand "the birds, the trees and even the dead in the cemeteries" had been allowed to cast ballots.)

It was in this moment of national crisis—on 31 August 1950—that President Quirino took Magsaysay from his elective seat in Congress and appointed him to the cabinet as Secretary of National Defense. It happened to be, at that particular moment in Philippine history, the key position: and Magsaysay, without benefit of much political experience or of statesmanly thinking, rose to the challenge and achieved great-

ness. He emerged, within a period of three years, not only as a national leader, but as the savior of his country.

He was a savior in three respects. First, he broke the back of the Huk rebellion, not only by the capture and imprisonment of the Communist Politburo, but also by his reform of the armed forces and his vigorous campaign of civic action in the areas of Central Luzon where the Huks were most powerful. If an oversimplification might be allowed, he destroyed the Huk rebellion and won over the erstwhile dissidents by his double slogan of "All-out war and all-out friendship."

Second, in a country badly demoralized by the 1949 elections, Magsaysay restored public confidence in the democratic system by using the armed forces and the ROTC cadets to police the 1951 elections. In those elections, the administration candidates were badly defeated and the moribund Opposition regained life. Magsaysay did not do this alone. He cooperated with a nation-wide movement among the citizens (some of whom belonged to the Namfrel—the National Movement for Free Elections) to insure free elections.

Thirdly, in a country seriously demoralized by graft, corruption, red-tape, and government indifference, Magsaysay injected a new faith in the powers and the sincerity of government by bypassing established channels and becoming directly available to the people, either in person or through the ten-centavo telegrams that any citizen anywhere in the Islands could send to him. Magsaysay was merely the Secretary of National Defense: but he in fact became, not only the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, but also the personal embodiment of Government in all its functions. He was the redresser of wrongs, the rewarder of virtue, the omnipresent supervisor who kept officials on their toes.

As was to be expected, this short-circuiting of normal channels (and what to some was a usurpation of powers) earned Magsaysay an ambivalent reputation: to the people he became a hero; to the administration, civil and military, he became the enemy to be destroyed. The battle was joined in the elections of 1953. After an epic campaign in which almost everyone took

part (and particularly the Jaycees and other organizations of young people) Magsaysay was elected President of the Philippines by an overwhelming majority.

The details of that campaign—the original suggestion from Manuel “Dindo” Gonzales; the secret meetings at Oscar Arellano’s house and elsewhere; the intervention of Emmanuel Pelaez; the hesitations of Laurel and Recto; the “Magsaysay Mambo” composed by Raul Manglapus; the short-lived candidacy of Romulo; the attempts of the sugar-bloc to oust Carlos Garcia in favor of Fernando Lopez as vice-presidential candidate; the efforts of the Namfrel and other organizations—these and other things are well described in Abueva’s book. (Abueva is particularly good, however, in discussing the cross-currents affecting government policy after Magsaysay’s accession as President.)

VIII

Magsaysay’s inauguration as President of the Philippines on 30 December 1953 must go down in history as one of unparalleled public enthusiasm. After the formal oath-taking, the people did what they would never have dared to do to Quezon or any of Magsaysay’s predecessors in the presidency: they broke through police cordons and carried him bodily, fighting for the privilege of touching him, with such vigor that his clothes were ripped off. Magsaysay responded to this public enthusiasm by declaring Malacañang Palace—the proud home of Spanish and American governors and later of Filipino presidents—a public place, open to the populace.

Had Magsaysay died early in 1954 during his first few months in the presidency, he might have gone down in history as the greatest of Philippine heroes, eclipsing both Rizal and Quezon. As it was, he lived for another three years: and those—more than the plane-crash on Mount Manunggal—were his real tragedy.

Magsaysay had been a great leader in the fight against the Huks, in the campaign for free elections, in the campaign to bring the government to the people. But the presidency was a different thing. There were problems of foreign policy

and problems of internal government which required careful planning, long-range programs, interlocking operations. Magsaysay was all too ready (as Quezon had been) to make personal, impulsive, on-the-spot decisions, without understanding in depth the true nature of the problem for which he was so ready to give solutions.

He was also hampered by his very goodness, his lack of ruthlessness in dealing with politicians who sought only their own ends. Among his greatest hindrances were some of the very men who had helped him obtain the presidency. To be nominated by the Nacionalista Party as their official candidate, he had to enter into a secret agreement with the Opposition leaders, notably Senators Laurel, Recto and Tañada. Laurel and Recto agreed to sacrifice their own presidential ambitions in order to make common cause with Magsaysay against President Quirino. But once Magsaysay was elected, he found that Laurel and Recto expected to be consulted on every issue, with the result that Magsaysay would become merely a puppet, controlled by strings from the Senate. A head-on collision between Recto and Magsaysay was in the offing when Magsaysay died in March 1957.

This was where the deficiencies in Magsaysay's training showed. Unwittingly, he gave substance to the belief that in the art of government, it is not enough to be sincere and devoted to the public service. Honesty, integrity, dedication Magsaysay possessed to an outstanding degree. But he lacked the political experience, the wisdom and sagacity, and the economic statesmanship needed to guide the destiny of a nation. It might not be unkind to say of Magsaysay what Tacitus had said of a Roman general: "*Galba, omnium consensu optimus imperator nisi imperasset*"—everyone agreed the Galba would make the best commander-in-chief, until he became one.

In the end, even those who recognized Magsaysay's greatness were forced to admit that his tragic death in March 1957 may have been a merciful end. On that occasion, this reviewer wrote an editorial in *Philippine Studies* entitled "The Death of the Great". The title was not misplaced: for despite glaring

errors during his three years as President, Magsaysay was indeed great. And his death, coming so suddenly, reminded this reviewer of another saying of Tacitus: "*Breves et infausti populi Romani amores*": those whom the Roman people loved were fated not to live long.

IX

One of the many points in which Quezon and Magsaysay differed was in their attitude towards Americans. It is an oversimplification to say that Quezon was "anti" and Magsaysay was "pro" American. Their attitudes were more complex than that; and these attitudes arose out of their personal experiences and the circumstances in which they had to deal with Americans.

Quezon's first contact with Americans was as enemies during the Philippine-American War, enemies whom one had to kill or be killed by them. Quezon eventually had to surrender to the Americans, and had the galling experience of being treated as a prisoner. He had the even more galling (because more permanent) experience of being treated as a creature of inferior race, to be alternately ordered about and humored with condescension. Others would have succumbed from fear or be reduced to subservience. Quezon decided to fight back. All his life he was fighting back against Americans—which may explain why Americans respected and feared him. And yet, to their credit, he had many American friends who were loyal to him to the end.

Magsaysay grew up in an entirely different atmosphere. In his day, Americans were not foes but benevolent friends. Quezon had to learn English by self-study in order to survive; Magsaysay learned English the easy way, in school, because there was little else to learn.

During the war, Quezon discovered a different side to America. Americans and Filipinos were fighting on the same side against the Japanese invaders. It was under American protection that Quezon lived in Corregidor and escaped to the

United States. It was as a guest of America that he lived his last years in Washington and at Saranac Lake.

Magsaysay did not have to discover this other side of America. It was the only side he knew. He did not fight in Bataan, but he worked with Americans in the underground resistance to Japanese Occupation. When the Americans returned he, like most Filipinos, welcomed them as friends and liberators. It was the most natural thing to accept appointment from them as military governor of his province. As congressional committee chairman for the armed services, it was to the Americans that he turned for help to rearm the country after a disastrous war that had been fought under the American flag. When the Huks threatened to overwhelm the country, it was to Americans that Magsaysay turned for help and advice.

As Secretary of National Defense Magsaysay worked in closest cooperation with Colonel Lansdale. Magsaysay has been criticised as being merely Lansdale's puppet. The best refutation of that accusation is Lansdale's own book. Lansdale takes the credit for many things, and perhaps rightly so: but he never takes credit for manipulating Magsaysay. It was to lend assistance to Magsaysay, and to advise him where advice was requested, that Lansdale made his best contribution to the course of events. Lansdale's assistance was considerable: Magsaysay's story cannot be fully told without taking note of that assistance. But one must also note its limits. Lansdale makes it clear that he had nothing to do with Magsaysay's seeking the presidency. "Unknown to me," says Lansdale, "he started meeting secretly with leaders of two opposition political parties." The secret pact between Magsaysay and the three leaders of the Opposition (Laurel, Recto, Tañada) was signed on 16 November 1953.

On the evening of November 16, after signing the pact, Magsaysay visited me and told me about it. My main concern, as I heard the details, was whether or not Magsaysay had had to compromise his own beliefs. He assured me that he had made no deals for political pay-offs. It actually was to be a crusade to achieve decent government, nothing else. He asked me about American reactions. I told him that Ame-

ricans who knew him would be enthusiastic about his running for the presidency. U.S. official policy, though, would certainly be non-partisan and I would have to abide by it despite our friendship.

If Magsaysay's story cannot be fully told without advertising to Lansdale's help, neither could it be fully told without taking note of the many young Filipinos who devoted all their time and energy to the Magsaysay campaign. Magsaysay was the people's candidate. In particular, the young people—not so much the teenagers, but those in their twenties and thirties; those who had fought in Bataan, who had been imprisoned in Fort Santiago; who had been disillusioned by the widespread graft, the government inaction, the fraudulent elections, the use of force to entrench oneself in power. The young people hoped for a cleaner government under more vigorous leadership. They pinned their hopes on Magsaysay. With Magsaysay the young people won. The tragedy of Manunggal was the young people's tragedy.

X

One last point. Both Quezon and Magsaysay were fortunate in their wives. In the Philippines, the wife of the President occupies a more important position than presidents' wives elsewhere. Both Mrs. Quezon and Mrs. Magsaysay occupied that position with dignity and grace. They were acclaimed as ornaments of Filipino womanhood. They were pious. They were exemplary Catholics. And they lent their presence to civic enterprises and worthwhile causes. But they never meddled in politics. At no time during their husbands' term of office could it be said that political decisions were made by (or under the undue influence of) the wives. After their husbands' death, one or other lady may have felt free to intervene in politics — which was of course their right. But they kept their place during their husbands' incumbency. Which may perhaps explain why, even after their husbands' death, they retained the people's affection.