The Two Traditions

The year 1919, when Benigno Aquino was first elected deputy of the second district of Tarlac, can serve to mark the end of the Empire Days. With the 1920s another era obviously opens. Actually, the Jones Law of 1916 was supposed to have begun a period of autonomy for the islands, and Governor-General Harrison had "rapidly Filipinized the civil service, the cabinet, and even his own office, by yielding some of its prerogatives to Sergio Osmeña and Manuel Quezon, the two foremost native leaders." But it was under the imperious Wood during the 1920s, rather than under the complaisant Harrison, that the Filipino leaders realized how the initial period of American control had indeed ended, as they made manifest when they accused Wood of trying to turn the clock back to the time of the Government of the United States in the Philippine Islands.

The Wood argument was that Harrison had conceded too much to native leaders when he need not have done so. The Philippine thesis was that Harrison could not have acted otherwise — nor could Wood either. Wood, said Quezon, "would have turned the clock back if it had been in his power to do so." The Filipinos proved their point: that Wood did not have the power; that there was no going back to the sahib rule of Otis and MacArthur. When he tried to act the proconsul, Wood was destroyed. His successor, Stimson, as grim a foe of Philippine independence, had learned a lesson: one's true face must not be worn in the islands. When Mr. Stimson first received the Filipinos at the Palace, his wife wore a native terno.

The "good fight" had been won; the American as sahib had been buried, along with his Government of the United States in the Philippine Islands.

1Theodore Friend, Between Two Empires, p. 3.
2The Good Fight, p. 139.
Islands. Henceforth, to term the government "insular" was to call it "national."

The victory, however, was hollow, for, paradoxically, the end of the Empire Days was the start of a truer American dominance in the islands. Through the 1900s the old culture had been sovereign, marking off the American as alien; he was Yanqui or Gringo, the enemy, and his protégés were mocked as "Sajones" or "Sajonistas." But after 1919 the picture changes: it's the people of the old culture who begin to look alien; the Sajones have become the "real" Filipino, and American the mother culture.

The feud which Osmeña and Quezon began the 1920s, though couched in political terms — "Unipersonalista" versus "Colectivista" — was actually a cultural battle, between a pragmatist, Quezon, who had learned to speak the language of the new culture, and a conservative, Osmeña, who had not. "Quezon's mastery of English gave him an immediate link with the younger Filipino generation who were graduating from or being educated in the schools and colleges [where] English was the exclusive language of instruction. Until much later, Speaker Osmeña would not attempt to make public speeches in English. It seemed to embarrass him to stumble or fumble in English, perhaps because in his conversations and speeches in Spanish, as his contemporaries said, he talked 'like a book.' While Quezon, forever young at heart and talking their own language, became identified with the younger generations, Osmeña, although about a month younger than Quezon, became associated with the older Spanish-speaking generation. . . The Philippines was undergoing a transition not only in government but in language and, by force of circumstances, while Osmeña was still building the political bridges, Quezon had already crossed the lingual barrier." 43 By 1922 the municipal board of Manila was moving to adopt English as its language because all the newly elected councilors "speak and write English." 44 And by 1925 the civil service examinations were being given almost entirely in English. The first of several generations of Filipinos had appeared that would identify with the American, lovingly assuming that American and Philippine interests were identical.

The Jazz Age, therefore, rather than the Empire Days, was when we lost free will; and it's eerie that the illusion of autonomy and the maneuvering for political independence should be liveliest during this period when we were being made so utterly a cultural and commercial adjunct of empire. We were fighting the war of independence on the wrong front. Had the resistance to "sajonization" been continued beyond the Empire Days, the winning of political independence would have confirmed an inner freedom kept inviolate; for only in the military sense could the Philippines of the 1900s be deemed a colony of America; it was strictly conquered territory, possessed against its will; and determined to keep itself distinct in every way from the conquers: distinct in speech, distinct in dress, distinct in culture. Only in the 1920s, when it embraced the conqueror's language and life-style, did it become — and very willingly. — an American colony, a province of the American market, having acquired American appetites. An accident of history thus became the essence of history; what began as a military situation was developed into a national condition; and a state of mind accepted as passionately as we embraced sajonization cannot be ended by the mere grant of political independence — as we have discovered. How do we break with our conqueror who have transformed ourselves into him? For in discarding the old culture we discarded as well the sense of identity it had achieved during its fight for freedom. With the Filipino then created, the Filipino evolved under American auspices could hardly feel himself continuous. Osmeña failed to build the necessary bridges because he thought they should be "political"; and when Quezon crossed the "lingual barrier" he simply left behind the gap from which our culture has suffered.

The tragedy was to be dramatized by another political pair, younger than Osmeña and Quezon, but likewise embodying the clash between the will to stay different and the passion to emulate. These two young politicians, Benigno Aquino and Manuel Roxas, first came to prominence during the feuding of Unipersonalista and Colectivista; but their choice of camp transcends the political quarrel. It was inevitable, given his background, that Aquino should align himself with Osmeña, who stood, however hazily, for a continuity in culture; and just as inevitable that Roxas, one of the first graduates in law of the Americans' University of the Philippines, should ally himself with Quezon. When Roxas succeeded Osmeña as Speaker, the shape of our future became definite; it's equally significant that Aquino should become Speaker only when the Americans had been ousted from the scene. Both Aquino and Roxas have gone down in our history under a cloud: the first for being so anti-American, the other for being too pro-American. But while it's possible to go back to one, the other has ceased, except as culprit, to be relevant. Since the disenchantment with America, such attitudes as Don Benigno carried over from his father and the 1900s have become contemporary again. Despite the triumph of sajonismo in the 1920s, some kind of resistance continued to be offered by the old culture, even when a natural champion of it like Recto had defected to the other camp; and in this continuing opposition Benigno Aquino may be said to have been the deputy of the older nationalists, who were rejected for rejecting sajonization. They lost all the battles, but not, it seems, the war, which has been resumed. Like Aquino then, the young activist now who stones the U.S. embassy is a deputy of

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[^2]: París, Osmeña, p. 262.
[^3]: 50 Years with the Times, June 12, 1972.
the old culture, though he may have no memory of, nor even sympathy for, it and does not know that he is at last continuing what was broken off by the 1920s.

Another observation that can happily be made is that what's commonly accepted as our history since the 1900s (Federalismo, the First Assembly, Osmeña and Quezon, the Jones Law, the Commonwealth, etc.) may be just a current, not quite mainstream, of our actual history, because it develops only one of the two traditions we inherited from the nationalist struggle. The movement towards nationalization that began in the 1790s with the Creole activists produced both a tradition of protest through peaceful means, the Propaganda, and a tradition of protest through violence, the Revolution. These two traditions have become identified with social classes, peaceful reform being usually associated with the middle class, violent revolt with the masses; but our history supports no such classification. The Creole began with peaceful protest but quickly moved on to a violent activism (Navales, the Palmeros, the Cavite Mutiny) that could have turned, as in Latin America, into a revolution, but for the effective iron fist of the State, which crushed elite activism after the Mutiny of ’72. When we derive as craven the later elite class that recoiled in horror from Bonifacio’s radical proposals, we are reading the recoil out of context: it was bred into the elite class by two decades of persecution, during which they were seated for the garrote and stood up for the firing squad, banished to the Marianas and imprisoned in Spanish Africa, deprived of home and boarded at Fort Santiago. A burnt child, the bourgeois can hardly be blamed for shrinking from the fire next time — which explains the obsessive non-violence of Rizal and the Propaganda, and their moderate objectives: social reform, public education, the assimilation of the Philippines as a province of Spain.

The Propaganda failed and, in despair, both the proletariat (Bonifacio’s Katipunan) and the middle class (Aguinaldo’s insurrection) shifted from peaceful to violent measures. It is seldom stressed that Bonifacio too — the Bonifacio of the Masonic Order and the Liga Filipina — began as a “moderate” within the Propaganda Movement. When the Revolution was defeated, the middle class (as after the ’72 agony) again retreated to the other tradition by resuming the Propaganda. The Partido Federal of the 1900s was proposing nothing new when it pressed for the annexation of the Philippines as a state of the American union; this was but a resumption of the older campaign to have the Philippines integrated to Spain as a province. In both cases, the immediate desire was to end the status of the islands as a colony; in the ultimate aims — reform and autonomy — the 1900s were continuing the 1880s, or, for that matter, the period of Burgos.

Similarly, the independence missions we sent to Washington were a resumption of the Propaganda Movement of the 1880s, when we were sending analogous missions to Madrid, retaining friendly politicians to lobby for us there, and maintaining correspondents abroad (like the Solidaridad group) to push our cause and publicize the capabilities of the Filipino — exactly as we were to do in Washington. The difference, of course, was that the later Propaganda was more successful politically; when Quezon entered Malacanang in 1935, the Creole had at long last won his war — and so had the middle class in general. But the nationalist struggle was not yet over; the war of national liberation had not been won (as used to be claimed) through the peaceful devices of the Propaganda, but continues to cost the usual toll of violence.

Our history from the 1790s can thus be read as an alternation of Propaganda and Revolution: a period of peaceful protest exploding into desperate violence to be followed again by an interlude of moderation. But the reading holds good only until the 1900s; from that time to the present, the two traditions, instead of alternating, have been running parallel, for side by side with the peaceful neo-Propaganda of the middle class, we have had, since the 1900s, a continuing Revolution, which forms our underground or outlaw history, but which a later age may read as mainstream, defining as it does the movement of the great mass of the people who (as the Democrats of the 1920s loved to say) had little, if any, part in the history that the Messrs. Quezon and Osmeña were supposed to be making, the history (Philippine Assembly and Jones Law and Commonwealth, etc.) now accepted as national, though it ignores the greater movement of the period: the revolt of the masses.

This revolt escapes notice as a single progression because care is taken to present its various stages (Guardia de Honor, Santa Iglesia, Tangalan, Colorum, Partido Comunista, Partido Socialista, National Peasants Union, League of the Sons of Labor, Sakdal, Frente Popular, Hukbalahap, etc.) as isolated activism led by queer or criminal types. After the capture of Aguinaldo, for instance, and the surrender of what generals still remained in the hills, the Americans again had to explain why their solders were still being killed in battle if the insurrection, including its guerrilla aftermath, had been definitely ended; and the explanation offered was that the continuing disorders were in no way connected with each other nor with the earlier revolutionary movement that its leaders, the cultured class, had already abandoned, but were simply the individual capers of crackpots and badmen. “Chiefs were developed from the ladrone element and other vicious classes who were disposed to continue preying upon the people after the mass of intelligent men had decided to conform to the new conditions... In this way were formed the numerous bands of outlaws that for the next few years infested the Tagalog provinces, some claiming a political mission, others inspired by fanatical religious leaders, but most of them having purposes undefined, and existing to no other apparent end than to rob and steal, cattle rustling...
being their chief occupation." Because this explanation was accepted, a figure like Sakay, "President of the Philippine Republic," has no place in our official history, except, in footnotes, as a notorious bandit during the Empire Days; and Ricarte, for whom the Americans had a special odium as the continuer of the Revolution through the 1900s, has been denied the status of hero. The revolt of the masses was shrugged off as "cattle rustling."

Thus we were trained to read as mainstream the peaceful activities of the neo-Propaganda of this period (1900-20) despite abundant evidence that the pertinent history here is the continuing and violent resistance by the masses to "benevolent assimilation." But one perceptive American did come to realize that what were being made to appear as isolated disturbances (though ranging from Cagayán to Surigao) actually formed a national movement: "the second wind of the insurrection." In other words, armed rebellion did not cease with the capture of Aguinaldo; while on this side of the fence the Federalistas were pleading for annexation and the First Assembly was legislating and the señores were organizing independence missions, on the other side of the fence the Revolution was still being fought — with the difference, as the Americans were at pains to emphasize, that the leadership had been taken over by the lower classes. For even the most sanguine among the Yanqui had finally to admit that as late as December, 1914, a "Revolutionary Army of the Philippines" still existed and was active: "The organization was an oathbound society in which use was made of the pacto de sangre, and its membership, like that of the society founded by Andrés Bonifacio, was composed of domestics, cooks, cocheros, muchachos, and such like, a class wholly without education or intelligence." What this reveals is that the Revolution which continued into Empire Days was no longer the bourgeoisie enterprise of the 1890s; it had been captured by the proletariat (Sakay, for example, was a barber); it had become at last truly a movement of the dispossessed, or, as the Americans sneered, of "the more ignorant people of the laboring classes." And in fact the Americans were quick to see that the burgeoning labor movement was part of this "second wind" of the Revolution.

"Isabelo de los Reyes, recently arrived from Spain where he had carried on an insistent infamous campaign against the United States and everything American, laid the foundations of the first 'labor party.' Dominador Gómez, who had also recently returned from Spain with the intention of keeping alive the fires of revolt, succeeded to the presidency of the labor movement and likewise got into trouble with the authorities, was arrested and tried for estafa, conspiracy and other crimes... There was even more to the Reyes-Gómez labor movement than was believed at the time efforts were being made by the government to suppress it."

The pattern had been set. Henceforth, the labor movement was to be identified with the "intention of keeping alive the fires of revolt" and to be harassed with charges of "estafa, conspiracy and other crimes." And the Revolution of which the labor movement was a part would be conjured out of sight, debunked beneath the historian's interest by being associated with quacks, knives, dupes, madmen, convicts, bandits, fugitives from the law, cocheros, barbers, cooks, servants, wandering preachers, farm hands, tenants, folk mystics and illiterate laborers: the catalogue is borrowed from American dossiers of circa 1914.

From that time on the peasant and proletarian revolutionary becomes the invisible man of our society, unregarded though incessantly active, and surfacing only in the bloody outbursts (the Colorum in the '20s, the Sakdal in the '30s) so quickly dismissed as aberrations. For how unthinkable that our history under the Jones Law or the Commonwealth could have been one of steady violent dissent. The history we saw plain was the one being made by "the mass of intelligent men who had decided to conform." Yet in the '20s and '30s, no less than in the 1900s, the alienated masses were making their own history, especially in the Tagalog-Pampango terrain, where, as we have begun to realize, not even the surest folk cult could have been wholly innocuous. To paraphrase the Yanqui, there was always much more to every such movement than was believed at the time efforts were being made by the government to suppress it. And the much more was an education for the masses quite different from what they were supposed to be getting in the public schools. Only if we assume that such an education was effected can we understand why a supposedly halcyon period of training for self-rule should have produced, with the attainment of independence, a violent revulsion over the independence thus attained — a revulsion first blazoned by peasants we would not have thought capable of such a sophisticated reaction. Evidently the invisible man had been undergoing a development of his own not recorded in textbook histories.

A true history of the Philippines since the 1900s would therefore be as concerned to scan that development as the development of bourgeois politics, examining, by a juxtaposition of our conventional with our underground history, the later career of the two traditions: the Propaganda of the middle class, the Revolution of the masses. A probe would be made to show how, parallel with the campaign for political independence, there was a struggle for the more essential freedoms by the mass of the people, among whom a growth in class consciousness was man-

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2 Watson Collection, Appendix No. 149: The Christmas Eve Fiasco of 1914.

3 James H. Blount in American Occupation of the Philippines.

4 Watson Collection, Appendix No. 149.
manifested by the rise in labor and peasant militancy. The same emphasis placed on the events of conventional history (Jones Law, Commonwealth, etc.) would accentuate the events of the other history — for example, the "second wind" of the Revolution in Empire Days, or the various peasant uprisings that form so ominous a sequence from the 1920s on. The local evolution of radical parties would rate as much attention as the fortunes of the Partido Nacionalista o Liberal, and beside the familiar "national" figures would at last be set the protagonists of the other tradition, from Ricarte and Sakay, through the magic of the charisma cults, to such darklings as Crisanto Evangelista, Ascedillo and Benigno Ramos. The need for this becomes clear if we ponder the disparity in regard accorded the two Abad Santoses. José Abad Santos has been enrolled as hero because he kept faith with Quezon and America; but Pedro Abad Santos, who devoted all his life to educating the masses in the dignity of their station and the preeminence of their rights, hardly exists as landmark, although it is surely obvious by now that his life has had profounder consequences for us than his brother's death. But he is not important because he is not "history," and he is not "history" because the Socialist movement has to be downgraded as aberrant, in the same way that the Yaquei, to prove that sionismo was not a deviation but rather the progressive way of life for the Filipino, had to defame the Revolution as cattle rustling.

A record made total through the counternaming of surface with subterranean occurrence would reveal the criteria with which to measure importance and would remove the mystery from shockers like the eruption of the Hukas in the '40s or of youth activism in the '70s. These would be seen, no longer as astonishing anomalies, but as the crises of a resistance in progress since the 1900s, fully out in the open at last; and their enlistment of what are usually Establishment forces (students, clergy, the intelligentsia, even the military) would be recognized as having antecedents in our history. Again and again a group's protest will suddenly attract elements from other groups and swell into a general insurgency that transcends its origins. Such coherings mark the high points of our history, when Propaganda and Revolution, not to mention the social classes, fuse into a whole. In the 1870s the Creole revolt thus magnetized the fragments of native society, and so thoroughly that after '72, as contemporary observers warned, what were formerly thought to be the irreconcilable spheres of Creole, Indian, mestizo and Chinese abruptly became a single fearful entity: the Filipino. And in the 1890s a few provinces launched a rebellion that was to drag in the intellectual, the peasantry, the clergy, the Masons, the elite, the studentry, the moderate, the radical, the propagandist and the revolutionary. Though such cohesions were fitful, each one was a glimpse of nation, as though lightning had revealed another side of a face.

Today there are signs of another climacteric, reminiscent of the crises of 1872 and 1896. Again what was underground is surfacing as a wider insurgency, attracting multiform support. The conversion into Huks of intellectuals like the Lava brothers was an early omen; so was the shift to the left of such an august "conventional" politician as Mr. Recto and of the well-heeled crowd that formed the neo-nationalists of the 1950s. But it is the activist era that has made protest motley, allying nun and factory worker, the egghead and the jeepney driver. Even student participation is cause for surprise, for the produce of our school system had hitherto been the firm base of the Philippine-American Establishment: they were the first Sajones; on their shoulders Mr. Quezon rode to power; and what recalcitrance they displayed in prewar days was aimed at momentary irritants (Mr. Wood, say, or some rashness of Mr. Quezon's) but never against a system it would be heresy to question, nor against a mother country under whom we had "made more progress in forty years than in three centuries under Spain." (The sasajismo that had become second nature to the studentry then survives in the group that is today pressing for Philippine statehood.) How the Sajonistas recoiled in horror when just before the war the Ateneo — of all schools! — was tainted with anti-Americanism. To be anti-American was to be anti-democracy; such were the terms for what, in Empire Days, was called "cattle rustling," and would later, during the Republic, be called "Un-Filipino Activities," a term that is itself un-Filipino, bearing but another parroting of the U.S. eagle.

Yet the student who today stones the U.S. embassy instead of genuflecting to it will not seem so startling a novelty if we bear in mind that the resistance to "benevolent assimilation" was not crushed in the 1900s; it went underground, it took on wild and sinister forms, but it survived and continued, arguing, often against bullets, that what the country needed was not propaganda but a social revolution, not "complete, immediate and absolute independence" but the liberation of the masses, and not "economic progress" but the economics of the progressive. For the modern activist all these emancipations hinge on a crucial door: the freeing of a mind still slave within the supposedly freed Filipino. This, of course, is the reverse of our condition in the 1900s, when the effort to stay culturally unconquered implied a will to keep the spirit free even though the body be fallen into bondage, as the raped girl still keeps her chastity. But eventually the heart, too, was surrendered; and by the 1920s, when he was starting his political career, a "deputy" of the Revolution like Benigno Aquino was faced by the same problem now confronting us: how to push political independence as the confirmation of an inner freedom (whether gained or conserved) at a time when there was less and less of that freedom to be confirmed. And he already saw, as we see now, why that freedom was being lost.
"To my mind," said Benigno Aquino then, "one of the tragedies of present-day thinking in this country is the desire to use our general plan of public instruction as an instrument for the Americanization of our customs, our mannerisms, and our way of expressing ourselves. ... Even our hearts are now speedily beating and our souls sighing in the Anglo-Saxon way."9

The recalcitrants of the 1900s could objectively desire independence from the American because they were conscious of being so different, so separate, from him. The freedom they had gained, during the war with Spain, they thus wished to conserve, despite the American occupation. This freedom, too, was objective, for at the time of the Revolution we were not economically dependent on Spain, so that our break with the old mother country was painful only on the battlefield. But within two or three decades of our association with the United States we had become so fastened commercially to the new mother country that any sudden severance, we were warned, would mean our economic ruin. Such was the famous "progress" we had made. It was a condition obviously antithetical to freedom, and which political independence alone could not liberate, especially since we were being drilled from childhood to regard our condition as a kind of state of liberty, the envy of other Orientals. The more Americanized we became, the more modern and democratic and liberated were we. But Aquino attacked this creed as a "surrender of the soul."10

"We are," said he, "surrendering our soul to the dictates of the sovereign master; and such a surrender, to my thinking, is the worst kind of slavery for us. As we speak English and think in English we shall soon love English so much that it would be impossible for us to love anything else."10

The political dilemma (advocacy of an independence that the Americanized Filipinos increasingly saw as neither necessary nor desirable) was thus exposed as a cultural product. The Filipino who could deem himself not very different or separate from the American had become prevalent enough to lend absurdity to the idea of fighting for independence. If people like Aquino felt that a grant of political independence should at best be a formality, effective only if confirming a freedom already achieved, for the Americanized, too, though in a different sense, independence would be merely a formality, meaningless because as incapable as the Pacific Ocean of sundering them from their Mother America. They could admire independence as an "ideal," or even desire it in an abstract way, as the conventional thing to desire; but simply could not see it as anything practical; and this reduction of the objective to mere emotion was to make our politics ambivalent. Throughout his career Benigno Aquino was to find himself berating as "double-faced" the independentistas who advocated with their mouths what they did not want in their hearts — Mr. Quezon not excluded. It has not been noted enough that in the famous Quezon dictum — "I would prefer a government run like hell by Filipinos to one run like heaven by Americans" — he was careful to say "government," not "country," and that he was speaking within the context of a colonial dispensation whose benefits (sugar quota and the U.S. marines) he was willing to enjoy while at the same time insisting on political autonomy (the "government run like hell" by himself and cronies). As usual he was confusing politics with freedom; and there was point to the American gibes that Filipinos wanted to eat their cake and have it too. With one face we cried: Complete, immediate, absolute; and with another face we whispered: Not so fully, not so fast, not so final.

Said Aquino:

"We are in imminent danger, and the hopes of our people to become free are being seriously jeopardized. We are clamoring for immediate independence while at the same time giving up our entire soul to the sovereign master."

When he spoke, saxonismo was becoming our way of life and he could only have sounded wrong-headed and irrelevant; but he can be seen now as gesturing back to the 1900s, the period of unravishment, and also forward — to the jolt of the Pacific war and what would come after: disenchantment and the catharsis of the '70s.

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9Debate on the language for the courts; Manila Times, Sept. 21, 1928.
10Manila Times, Sept. 21, 1928.
THE SAJONISMO of Empire Days had little effect on the young Benigno Aquino because he moved in the old world of the accustomed: the hacienda in Murcia, Letrán in boyhood, Santo Tomás in adolescence, the lively house of the Ganzon aunts in Angeles, where revelry still meant square dances like the rigodon danced for fun. He always had to have his fun. His sister Fortunata recalls that, while at Santo Tomás, Benigno often disappeared for a day or two. A telegram would arrive in Murcia saying that Benigno had not been coming to classes. Don Mianong would hurry to Manila, usually taking the little Forting along: "Father always knew where to look for Benigno — usually at the Luneta, where we would see him with a girl. But Father never embarrassed him before a girl; we didn't even go near them. Father just took care that Benigno saw us; then we would go away, and Benigno would go back to school." And in school there was no faulting Benigno's performance¹, though he felt himself overshadowed by his cousin and stepbrother Salvador Estrada, who, thought Benigno, was handsomer and smarter and had picked the more glamorous profession.

The cousins graduated together in 1913 and the following year Benigno passed the bar along with such young men of promise as José Yulo, José Avelino, Francisco Villanueva and Manuel Morán. The two cousins then opened shop together, in Tarlac town, Salvador as doctor, Benigno as lawyer, sharing lodgings and office until Salvador married. Benigno would at last tackle American culture when he fell in love with a girl on a tennis court. Her name was Marfa Urquico, she was a formid-

¹In his five years in law school he never had a failing mark. In his first year he had two grades of Bueno, one of Aprobado. In his second year his marks were one Bueno, one Aprobado, and two Sobresaliente, the top mark. In his third year all his grades were Notable; and in his last two years he was Sobresaliente in all his subjects.
able tennis player; and Benigno set himself to learning the American game, so he could do his wooing on the Urquicos’ tennis court.

The Urquicos were rice merchants rather than planters, and owned the biggest house on the town plaza. Maria Urquico’s father, Capitan Antonio, was among the first Katipuneros in Tarlac; her mother, Doña Justa, was of the Valerianos of Bulacan and used to be in the slipper business in Meycauyan. The family joke is that Doña Justa, who, as a girl, traveled Central Luzon trading leather goods for stocks of rice, found the right slipper to fit Capitan Antonio: “It was the marriage of two very ambitious merchants.” Under Doña Justa’s management the Urquico enterprises became big business: a rice mill was put up in Tarlac town, a buying station was opened on the plaza and another buying station in Paniqui; Tarlac rice was thus cornered. Then the family went into real estate, buying up all available land until practically all of Tarlac town was Urquico real estate.

Doña Justa had two sons and three daughters; she put the two elder girls in a conven school in Hong Kong (they came home speaking English with a British accent); the younger boy was sent to study law in the United States, at Notre Dame; the elder son, Manuel Urquico, would become a legend in Philippine business, one of the first Filipino directors of Tabacalera and a speculator who lost something like 25 million pesos in a stock-market crash of the mid-30s. The youngest girl, Maria, was among the first certified public accountants (circa 1915) of the country and, at the time she caught Benigno Aquino’s eye, was the bookkeeper of the family business, besides being a pioneer tennis buff. To the tennis court that her mother had built for her came other aficionados of the net — Bienvenido Gonzales from Apalit, one of the Zamora boys from Manila — but Benigno Aquino was always there too, in his shirtsleeves, rumbling with a racket as Maria Urquico slammed him a backhand; her cotton stockings showing in the swirl of long white frock. He lost quite a number of sets but won the chief match.

In May, 1916, he and Maria Urquico were married. The wedding photos show her in a white terno; he is in top hat and tails. They went to live in a house near the market where their first child, Antonio, was born. Then they moved to Hacienda Tinang, which Don Mianong had turned over to Benigno. On the 1200 hectares was a large brick house that was to be their home until they transferred to Manila, and an old sugar mill. There was no sugar central then in Tarlac. Benigno got his brother-in-law Manuel Urquico to supply him with capital; then he cleared the hacienda, planted cane, put the sugar mill back into operation. He commuted between his law practice in town and the farm.

Says his son Antonio:

“Father was more a farmer than a politician. He took to politics like a duck to water but farming was his first love. The Aquinos have always been farmers — at least one of us in every generation. That’s why I ended up a lawyer by profession, a farmer by occupation. Father was happiest when he was working Hacienda Tinang. His tenants loved him because he was one of the more democratic landlords. Early in the morning, still in pajamas, he would sit down with them, his and their fighting cocks ready for some practice. Then he’d go down to the river and catch mudfish or catfish and have someone cook it right there on the riverbank and eat it with the tenants. When he went into politics he could not spend as much time in Tinang; it had to be run by remote control. But most of the free time he had he spent on the farm.”

The plunge into politics, in 1919, was an audacity, for Benigno Aquino, not yet 25, was pitting himself, a rebel Nacionalista, against the top man of the party in the second legislative district of Tarlac, Jose Espinosa, the incumbent representative. Fourth governor of Tarlac, in American times, Espinosa was at 45 a veteran politico and seemed headed for bigger things. His defeat was an upset. In the 1919 elections, held early in June, Benigno Aquino polled 3613 votes to Espinosa’s 2348, or a lead of over a thousand. On October 16, 1919, Benigno Aquino was seated in the House of the Philippine Legislature as the representative of the second district of Tarlac, although, when elected, he was not yet 25, the minimum age for deputies. Born on September 3, 1894, he was three months shy of the required age when he ran for the House; but since nobody questioned his age, he did not have the underage troubles that were twice to afflict his son Ninoy.

On opening day, a joint session of this second Legislature under the Jones Law was addressed, at the Ayuntamiento, by Governor-General Harrison, who delivered his message in Spanish, the last time a governor-general was to do so. (Two months later, on December 5, English was first used in the House, by Representative Eulogio Benitez of Laguna, a law graduate of the University of the Philippines, whose speech in English advocating approval of the budget was recognized as an event: he had to interrupt it to pose for a news photographer.) Harrison recommended to the solons the enactment of measures granting suffrage to women and imposing a liquor prohibition that would make the Philippines as “dry” as the United States had become. Happily, not even the Sajones were willing to go that far in emulating Columbia. Not as odd as it sounds was another activity — food production — that the governor-general urged on the lawmakers; many of them were, like Representative Aquino, gentlemen farmers.

Not there to hear Harrison was Speaker Osmeña, away on a trip to China and Japan. So, Mr. Quezon, as president of the Senate, was the highest Filipino official present that inaugural afternoon at the Ayun-

2Manila Times, December 6, 1919.
administration who would unobtrusively win away political powers from the governor-general. ... Osmeña fulfilled the assignment. 4 The Ayuntamiento therefore symbolized the No. 1 politico: Osmeña, Speaker of the House, head of the party in power, and leader of the Filipino participation in government; while the Intendencia only stood for No. 2. Until 1927, when the Legislature moved to a building of its own on Burgos Drive (the present Congress building), our political history was the feud between these two houses: the Intendencia against the Ayuntamiento.

The usual view is that Osmeña made a mistake in 1916 when he opted for the Speakership of the House instead of the presidency of the Senate; and that the latter position, being the more important, made inevitable the rise to supremacy of Quezon. But the history of the first two Legislatures plainly shows that control of the Senate in no way enabled Quezon to win any power (and this despite Harrison's partiality to him); Osmeña remained the leader and, as Quezon realized, would stay supreme as long as he headed the party in power. Osmeña therefore had made no error in choosing the House; it did not really matter where he was — House, or Senate, or Cabinet — as long as he controlled the Partido Nacionalista.

So, to depose Osmeña, the party had to be captured from him, or, if it were uncatchable, had to be divided and weakened. Which was what Quezon proceeded to do. His distinction between “duty to my people” and “loyalty to my party” was completely specious because he was speaking of a party that he knew was not his, a party he wanted either to capture or destroy. The alternative was not “duty to my people” but a continuing career as a subordinate, which had become unbearable. It was the Creole in Quezon that demanded to be No. 1 at last, after centuries of being No. 2 to the Peninsular. And the parliamentary issue first cropped up in this fight.

In opting for the Speakership, Osmeña had argued that the House would be a more immediate reflection of public opinion because all its members had to be elected every three years. In effect, as Osmeña saw it, the policies of the party in power were put to a vote of confidence in every election and the Speaker retained his position only at the will of the people — unlike his counterpart in the Senate, where, as stipulated by the Jones Law, only half of the membership were voted on in each election and the Senate president could keep his chair even if his party had not won a majority in the polls (as was to happen in 1922). Quezon thus had a point when he accused Osmeña of applying the parliamentary idea to a form of government that was not parliamentary; but Osmeña could have replied that our system then was not a presidential one either. With the governor-general reduced to a figurehead, responsibility for the government rested on the leader of the party in power, as long as he was 2

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3 Kalaw, Aide-de-Camp to Freedom, p. 127.
4 Kalaw, p. 127.
upheld by the polls. But this, according to Quezon, amounted not to a system of political parties but to a government by one person—hence, Unipersonalist, the tag attached to Osmeña. Quezon’s concept of leadership was the party itself as the collective will of its members—hence, Collectivista, the name given to the party he was to set up.

All this, of course, was sheer mystageyugy. No more than Osmeña could Quezon create a leader who was not a person but the quintessence of a number of persons, as though various bodies could become one head, or several soldiers a general. What riled Quezon was that the party was unipersonalist but that he was not the unipersona in it; and he was not to rest till he had made himself the noun. Nor was the verb in which Osmeña would put his trust any less delusiv. A fiat at the polls simply could not be equated with popular consent; because of limited suffrage, the electorate represented not the mass of the people but only an educated minority, the middle class, of which the Partido Nacionalista was the political organ. 6 In every election, therefore, a class party was, in effect, being judged by itself. This made it hard to tell not only if the people approved of the ruling party’s policies but also if those were at all the issues that concerned the people. In the 1920s, for instance, our “history” was the Unipersonalista-Colectivista war, an issue that could hardly have had the peasant in the field agog, assuming he could pronounce it. But in the world represented by the Ayuntamiento and the Intendencia, the power struggle was the very throb in the air when the second Legislature opened in October, 1919.

For the present, however, the war was in a state of quiet suspense; and neophytes like Benigno Aquino could learn their way, during the lull, around both sides of public life: the official and the social. It was an age when the feuds of politics were counter-pointed by the elegancies of polite society; and a dancing Legislature was as busy on the floor at night as in the daytime. Right after it opened, the festivities began, with a reception and ball given by Governor-General and Mrs. Harrison at the Palace, to which the “insular solons” came as guests of honor. “The Palace grounds were well illuminated while the gubernatorial residence itself was artistically decorated... Dancing was indulged in till two a.m. A light repast was served at midnight, refreshments being served the whole evening. The Constabulary orchestra furnished the music.” 7 Towards the end of the month Osmeña arrived from his Sino-Nippon trip and the Ayuntamiento welcomed him with a “gorgeous affair” a dance in the halls of state. Osmeña and Quezon stood together in the receiving line; the Harrisons drove down from Baguio to be among the 400 present. “At ten o’clock, dancing commenced and lasted till the wee hours.

Refreshments were served during the evening and a light collation was offered at midnight. The hall as well as the front part and foyer of the Ayuntamiento including the courts on both sides were appropriately decorated. “8 And the Marble Hall resounded to the strains of Swanee and K-K-Katy; the guests waltzed or foxtrotted to Dardanella, Alice Blue Gown, A Pretty Girl Is Like A Melody and the Merry Widow tunes. The holiday season that year had a post-Christmas climax; on January 8, Representative Aquino was among the “elite of Manila” invited by the Quezon to a dinner for the Harrisons. “Dinner was served on small tables which were placed here and there in beautiful rows in the garden of the Quezon residence in Calle La Mamá, in Sta. Ana. Small fountains, which were ordered from the States, sending forth tiny lines of water, jetted in several places. The garden was fittingly decorated for the occasion and on account of its proximity to the cool and murmuring Pasig river, the effect of its beauty was unique. Films taken by the MacRae party of movie actors in the city showed Manila’s choicest social gatherings. After dinner, dancing was indulged in till past midnight. The whole affair was voted to be the biggest hit of the season.” 9

But in those days when the tuxedo was part of the político’s uniform, the salons of dowager and debutante were not purely for romping, being also suburbs of the political front. Extensions of Ayuntamiento and Intendencia, for example, were the private clubs — the Club Filipino, the Club Nacionalista, the Tiro al Blanco in Sta. Mesa, the Carambola on Azcárraga — where dispute or intrigue, carried over from the halls of state, could be continued at the bar, the billiard table or the poker den; as were also certain taverns that had become political cabalas, chief of which was the Mignon Hotel off the Escolta, where the cuisine (Pampingo) was as notable as the clientele and the fortunes of the country were decided by a secret caucus in a smoke-filled room.

Such was the milieu in which Representative Aquino had to find his way; he was a quick learner, as Osmeña, whose would be credited with having “discovered” Aquino, saw at once. “From the Speaker’s rostrum, Osmeña could see the little figure of a young man, barely 25, discussing issues like a finished parliamentarian with seasoned members of the local legislature. Eagerly the great Filipino leader listened to the pronouncements of the youthful Tarlac solon on various subjects of national importance. Here was a young man, he told himself at the time, who could fittingly take his seat among the leaders of the nation or some day carry on the work of the aged leaders.” Aso early on, Aquino aligned himself with Osmeña, who promptly put the young man to use. When the party saw

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6 Manila Times, October 30, 1919.
7 Manila Times, January 9, 1920.
8 Newspaper write-up quoted in a 1940 brochure of the Department of Agriculture & Commerce.
9 Manila Times, October 17, 1919.
the need to create a budget commission (to wrest the budget role from Malacañang) Aquino was among those chosen to sponsor the proposal, obviously a “party bill,” in the House. His co-sponsors, especially Mariano Leuterio and Miguel Cuenca, were well-known Osmeña lieutenants; at that time Aquino had been only two months a soloon.

The bill most associated with his first term in the House created what was to become a historic body: the Independence Commission, for which Aquino proposed a permanent annual outlay of a million pesos. Though that was a staggering outlay in those days, the Aquino bill was not expected to have a rough go of it. “The speed with which the bill has been acted upon in the lower house,” reported the Manila Times on October 24, 1920, “is destined to be duplicated in the Senate.” But three days later the debate on the bill had “developed into one of the hottest sessions” of the House, because of opposition by the Democrats. The following day its champions were still unable to push through “House Bill No. 639 appropriating a permanent yearly fund of one million pesos for independence propaganda in the U.S. to be carried on by ‘missions’ — or ‘missionaries,’ as one of the opposition speakers jocosely styled them... Rep. Aquino who originated the bill then took up the defense much on the same ground of patriotism.”

Triumph came on October 28: “Before a compact mass of spectators that filled every nook and corner of the gallery, the debate on the now famous Million Peso Bill... culminated in a victory for its sponsors and friends, with no change whatsoever made, or even proposed, in its original wording. But it was a victory without exultation or any particular manifestation of joy at the results, which was a silent and fitting tribute that expressed louder than words... the victors’ inward conviction of the sincerity of their opponents’ oft-repeated confession of faith: I, too, no less than those of the majority, am a lover of my country and yearn to see her free and independent. The debate attracted not only the attention of the followers of Philippine politics but also that of ecclesiastical men. During Thursday’s session of the lower house, the presence of a bearded gentleman garbed in a mocha robe was noticed by many a representative.”

In the furor was first shaped Aquino’s popular fame: as “irreconcilable” independista.

A year later he was with the joint legislative committee that called on the new governor-general, Leonard Wood, to express the hope that Wood’s appointment was “a solid guarantee that the concessions already made to the Filipino people will suffer no curtailment but on the contrary will be extended to make possible the hastening of final and complete independence.”

That was in October again, 1921, and the impending war within the party would erupt at the same time that war was declared against the Palace. Once again would Filipinos choose to fight one another when there was need to unite against an alien foe.

Just before his appointment, Wood had, with Cameron Forbes, conducted a survey on the islands, on orders of the American president, and had submitted a pessimistic report: Philippine conditions had deteriorated in the previous eight years. A slap intended for the Democratic Party in the United States (the Republicans had just taken over) also hit the Partido Nacionalista, which had been in control of the insular government during most of the period in question. So, on December 12, 1921, the Nacionalista gathered in convention to answer, with a new party platform, the Wood-Forbes gibes at native leadership, but, as if to justify the gibes, themselves fell attacking their own leadership. The war had broken out, and was fought in the following days at the Ayuntamiento and the Intendencia, at the Mignon and the clubs. Quezon hurled his unpersonnel charge against Osmeña and preached his own doctrine of political communism. Presently both men were stripping themselves of their powers, which were transferred to a “steering committee” (a five-man body in the House, a three-man group in the Senate), to end, said Quezon, “a one-man rule in each house.”

It was quite a Christmas gift that Benigno Aquino got that year. Elected to the House steering committee, he became one of the most powerful men in the government, for the powers formerly exclusive to Speaker and Senate president and now given to the “steerers” were considerable: control over committee appointments, fund transfers, traveling expenses, extra per diems, the public works funds, the emergency funds, the government corporations, and legislative representation in the Council of State.

Neither this act of renunciation nor their subsequent “resignations” ended the war between Osmeña and Quezon. Two months later, on February 18, 1922, Quezon finally broke away from the old party to form his own: the Colectivista. Then both camps girded for the elections in June — which were, in a way, to be won by a third party: the unregarded Democrata.

In the 1922 polls, reelectionist Aquino led a field of five in his district, with his 2315 votes, or a thousand votes ahead of his nearest rival, again José Espinosa, trying for a comeback. Osmeña, carrying the war into Quezon’s bastion, ran for the Senate and won, but neither his party nor Quezon’s had gained a clear majority in the Senate, where the Democrats had increased their strength. However, Quezon had a trump in his pocket: the holdover senators, who might be just enough to ensure him

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1[Manila Times. October 28, 1920.]
2[Manila Times. October 29, 1920.]
3[The million-peso independence fund was annually appropriated until 1924, when it was declared illegal by the insular auditor. Funds for subsequent independence missions had to be raised by campaigns for public contributions, which could never raise enough money.

14[Manila Times, December 21, 1921.]
the Senate chair, even if the Nacionalistas and Democrats should join forces. Osmeña had rashly gambled on a Senate coup; he would later say it was his greatest mistake.

The House was even more of a cliffhanger. All three parties had grabbed an almost equal handful of seats, for the once insignificant Democrats had made amazing gains in the 1922 polls. Predicted Aquino: "It will be a bloc and not any particular party that will control the next Legislature, at least the House. The forces of the three political parties are now so well balanced that none of them will have the control." Actually, Osmeña had suffered heavily. His closest lieutenants, like Rafael Alunan, had not been returned to the House; even his campaign manager, Leuterio, had lost in the polls. Of his top leaders in the previous House, only Aquino survived.

The test of strength was the election of the Speaker. Aquino and Mariano Cuenco were the Nacionalista candidates; the Democrats had Claro M. Recto; Quezon was putting up his protégé, Manuel Roxas. When the Legislature opened in October the talk was that neither Osmeña nor Quezon could make their respective candidates win save in a coalition with the Democrats — and the Democrats were titillating both camps, egged on, it was said, by local Americans, including the governor-general. After the first ballot it was clear that Aquino was out of the Speakership race; the leading contenders were Roxas, Recto and Cuenco — but none of them could muster the necessary majority. When the voting had been deadlocked three times Osmeña saw that a coalition was inevitable. Since the Democrats had become suspect as an American tool he could turn only to the Colectivistas. On October 26 he swallowed his pride and entered into a coalition pact with Quezon; that evening Manuel Roxas was elected Speaker.

It was the turning point in Osmeña's career, when he stepped down from the top. Though he had done so in the honest belief that the government was best kept in Nacionalista-Colectivista hands, he was nullifying the will of the electorate, which, by voting in a large number of Democrats, had indicated a desire for a stronger Opposition. By joining forces with Quezon, Osmeña again reduced the Opposition to impotence. He would never be forgiven by his discarded candidate, Cuenco, whose resentment would grow into a clan feud with the Osmeñas. Another recalcitrant was Benigno Aquino, who refused to sign the coalition pact, though he must have known that this could cost him his career in the House. The crisis also further soured Aquino on the Democrats. Later that year, 1922, the Legislature sought to ask Washington for authority to hold a constitutional convention, a move blocked by the Democrats. An enraged Aquino accused them of advocating a "false independence" and of being but a new guise for all the previous parties that had championed annexation. The independista was as irreconcilable as ever and not even the now dominant Colectivistas could afford to ignore him, however they might feel about his refusal to sign the coalition pact. He was elected chairman of the House steering committee.

The year 1922 ended with Quezon at last on top. The party had been divided and then put together again, but with Osmeña now as No. 2. Quezon was head of the coalition, president of the Senate, master of the House through Roxas, and undisputed leader of the Filipino participation in the government.

In the duel with the Ayuntamiento, the Intendencia had won.

15 *Manila Times*, November 16, 1922.
The Hunting of the Hare

THOUGH most of his three terms in the House (1919-28), Aquino was chairman of the steering committee; and from his second term on, majority floor leader; but the Speakership eluded him, naturally, since he was elusive to the Quezon faction. It was noted against him that, though a member of the supreme council of the coalition, he never attended its meetings, even when in the city. At the beginning of his third term, in 1925, there were signs that the Quezon-Osmena coalition, which had come to be known as the Consolidado, was loosening. The Osmenaistas were deploiring an alliance in which, with every election in the Legislature, they were expected, as one newspaper put it, to "hear their master's voice and agree to support a single candidate."1 The Visayan bloc especially was finding it hard to hush in obedience when Quezon spoke. The Quezonistas were hardly pleased to hear the other half of the coalition referring to itself as "Orthodox," as if to imply that Don Manuel's Nacionalistas were heretics.

It was therefore no surprise though still a shock when in July, 1925, Aquino announced his candidacy for the Speakership. For a time it looked as if the revolt of the Orthodoxo had begun and that the three-year-old coalition would explode. The war whoop almost stole the headlines from the event of that month: flyweight Pancho Villa, first Filipino world champion, had died in San Francisco on the 14th, after having a tooth pulled out. The Orthodox rebellion did not materialize; Aquino was prevailed upon to withdraw his candidacy; Roxas was reelected Speaker. But his challenge had made Aquino even more suspect to the Quezonistas and there was an effort to dislodge him from the steering committee and to stop his reelection as majority floor leader. The move was decried as "re-

1*Tribune*, July 7, 1925. Allusion is to ad of dog hearing "his master's voice" on phonograph.
venge"; had it been pushed through, the coalition might have split after all.

What followed was equivocal: a sudden "boom" in a movement to send Aquino to Washington as resident independence commissioner. Were the suspicious trying to get rid of the House majority floor leader? "Some leaders of the Legislature declare that the Aquino boom is 'invincible'... It is explained that the commissioner's position entails a heavy drain on the incumbent's pocket, and that of a man of means and of proven ability should be chosen." The Aquino money would thus have been diverted to other uses than the support of his political faction. But as quickly as it had swelled the Aquino boom burst. "What was considered sure five days ago -- the election of Rep. Aquino as successor to Resident Commissioner Gabaldón -- became an uncertainty yesterday, when the question of selecting a candidate with a good command of English was brought out as a deciding factor in the choice of a man for the Washington post." Aquino had little English; and his opponents proclaimed their unwillingness to be "hoodwinked" into voting for "any man that may be chosen for political expediency or simply 'because of his ability to shoulder the financial responsibility' of the office." It's possible that those who wanted to kick Aquino upstairs had realized that such a determined independista might, even with no English, succeed in accomplishing in Washington what the Nacionalistas were supposed to want accomplished, though many of them were of two minds (and faces) about it.

The ambivalence that had come over the Filipino politician was to be noted by Commissioner Isao Gabaldón when he came home. "The commissioner returned to the Philippines to voice his protest against... the manner the present leaders of the Nacionalista party have abandoned the cause of immediate independence for the uncertain proposition of autonomy." The Gabaldón exposé was "one of the most spectacular incidents in the political annals of the country" and it cost Gabaldón his rank in the party. Unfazed, he ran on his own for the House in 1928, on a platform of immediate, complete and absolute independence, to underscore that this was no longer the Nacionalista platform under Quezon. "He arrested the popular imagination and it could not be seen how he could be defeated. However, politics in Nueva Ecija as anywhere is a tricky business." Gabaldón lost — and his loss, editorialized the Tribune, signified "the losing power of that old electioneering battle cry (absolute, complete and immediate independence) as a vote-getting shibboleth." The remark capsules the trend in the 1920s: a creeping doubt about the need for independence as faith grew in American benevolence — the ambiguity that Aquino so often had to attack, as when he charged that the appointive deputies for the non-Christian provinces represented not the people there but the American governor-general.

He was to carry his clamor for independence to Europe, in 1927, during the 24th annual conference in Paris of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, to which he and Isaac Lacson had been sent as delegates of the Philippine Legislature. To solons from the world's congresses, parliaments and legislatures, Aquino presented the Philippine situation:

"The United States, which has a traditional policy based on the declaration that all men have the right to be free, and which respects the principle of self-determination, has again and again, on diverse and solemn occasions, affirmed in official documents, in the pronouncements of its presidents, and even in laws passed by its congress, its intention to grant the Philippines its independence as soon as it succeeds in establishing a stable government.

"For more than a decade the Philippines has demonstrated the existence within its territory of a government of peace and order, with all the desired security for the persons and property of native and alien alike, and with complete freedom in the exercise of worship — a government that, as far as allowed by existing laws, is elected by popular suffrage and supported by taxes previously approved by the Legislature. Nevertheless, the Philippines is to this day still awaiting its final liberation..."

Though making the proper obeisances to Washington (the new method of colonialism, said Aquino, consisted of "sincerity on one side and gratitude on the other") the speech could not but seem anti-American, which may be why the French and Spanish delegates displayed the most sympathy towards the two Filipinos in the conference.

From Paris, Aquino and Lacson traveled to Spain and Russia. In Madrid they were assured by their dictator, General Primo de Rivera, that Spain would be the first to recognize the Philippines as a free nation. Aquino would have a favorite story about his Spanish trip. "In the neighborhood of Madrid where he took his lodgings, he was taken for a Chinaman. To correct that, he taught children to shout Viva Filipinas every time he came around and freely distributed coins to make them efficient and effective. Viva Filipinas rang emphatically in the neighborhood for the duration of his stay and the children made a good business of it. By the time he left, no Spaniard could mistake the country of his origin." The two envoys lost their luggage on the Russian border, which may explain Aquino's bleak view of the Bolsheviks. "Speaking of Russia, Rep.

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2Tribune, July 29, 1925.
3Tribune, August 1, 1925.
4Ibid.
5Tribune, June 7, 1928.
6Tribune, June 7, 1928.
7Federico Mangahas, Frontline Man, October 1943 issue of Phil. Review.
Aquino declared he noticed muted protest among the masses against the Soviet government. He predicted that Communism in Russia would not triumph. He said that the Russian government had attached public and private properties and controlled all the industries, so that one would find there even a shoe shop under government supervisory control. One cannot earn more than what one needs and a farmer's share in his harvest is restricted.

When Aquino came back, the Legislature had moved to its new neoclassic quarters off the Luneta. It was his last year in the House, he was set to run for the Senate. During that final term of his, he had challenged Quezon's hold on the House, had survived several attempts to topple him from the floor leadership, and had horrified the pious by introducing a bill to legalize divorce. It passed the House but ran smack into a storm of controversy.

In 1928, Aquino became a widower in March, a senator in June. His wife Maria had hung up her tennis racket when she married him and for twelve years, while he roamed in public life, had kept to the background, bringing up their four children: Antonio, Servillano, Milagros and Erinda.

"The first time we moved to Manila," recalls her son Tony, "we lived on Felix Huertas in Sta. Cruz. Then we moved to Colorado in Malate because my uncle, Manuel Urquico, had a house on Colorado and my mother wanted to be near the family. From there we moved to Pennsylvania, where Mila was born. Each of us was born in a different house. Then we moved back to Colorado, to stay with Tio Manuel, and Linda was born. In March of 1928, Mother died of cancer, after being ill three years. Mother never interfered in Father's political affairs, nor did she go to social functions. She dedicated all her time to us children. Nobody knew Representante Aquino had children. In fact, nobody knew he was married. Everybody thought he was a bachelor. He didn't exactly try to correct that impression. As a father he was very strict. He wanted us to study hard. I didn't see him often because he was always busy. The only time I'd see him was during vacation when he would take me to the hacienda and stay there a week and then go off again. I saw him only periodically. All the time he always stressed the need for honesty, integrity and honor above everything else. He was careful to reward me if my grades were good and he took me out to dinner when I got first honors. He took good care of his family."

What was then the third senatorial district consisted of Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga and Bulacan; and from this bailiwick Aquino ran for the Senate in 1928. He swept the heartland. He had been under age when he ran for the House; when seated in the Senate he was, at 34, one of the youngest members. But in the organization of committees he was assigned to the most prestigious ones — finance, appointments, corporations, agriculture, industry — and was made chairman of the committee on Mindanao and the special provinces. The curiosity of this period was his growing closeness to Quezon, who seemed to have won him over finally and to be grooming him, along with Roxas, for preeminence. Senator Aquino was made majority floor leader; and liaison became rapport. In 1930, when Quezon was mostly out of the country (and in perilous health), he left Aquino as acting president of the Senate. Then Aquino was appointed to the Council of State, the link between Malacañang and the Legislature. It looked as if the mantle of inheritance were being dangled before both Roxas and Aquino.

As the senator's career crested, his name was linked with the great beauties of the day, especially two recent queens of the carnival, Luisa Marasigan and Pacita de los Reyes; but he sprang a surprise with his second wedding: Aquino married an Aquino. A third cousin of the senator and sixteen years younger (he was 36, she was 20), the bride, Aurora Aquino, had known him since she was a child: "In fact, he bought me my first doll. And when he first married I was supposed to be the flower girl; I was six years old; but I got sick, probably because of the excitement." When he first ran for the Legislature she helped write his sample ballots; they were not printed then. "I was in grade school and my mother assigned me to do those sample ballots because our family was campaigning for him." Her father had started out poor, had become a major landowner in Concepcion, at whose house Cousin Benigno was a frequent overnight guest during campaigns. The little Aurora already idolized him: "It was a love that grew with me, for it was hero worship." When she moved to Manila for high school at the Instituto de Mujeres, college at the State University, she became a protégée of Don Benigno's wife, who looked after the girl like a mother. The young Aurora was part of the Aquino scene, ready with a garland to welcome him to some public ceremony, or with a song to delight some family fiesta, as in 1927, when the Aquinos celebrated the baptism of their youngest child with a picnic at the Tinang hacienda: "It was a whole day of fun and frolic, and dancing. At intervals, musical selections were given by the Misses Aurora Aquino, Pitang Guoco and Judeg Carballo..." Special trains conducted the visitors to the Aquino mansion. During the senator's widower days she was at the University of the Philippines; she was an education junior when, in 1930, he began to court her in earnest; they double-dated with the couple who were to become Francisco and Corazón Ortega. On December 6, 1930, Benigno and Aurora were married in Concepcion. She was heavy with their second child in November 1932 when he had to leave for Washington.

*Tribune. October 20, 1927.

Recalls Doña Aurora:

"President Quezon was sending him there but he was undecided about leaving because I was already about to deliver. I was in Concepción at that time and he came to consult me. I told him to go. There was a boat leaving on November 14 and I said: 'You go now because there will be no other boat.' So, when I delivered Ninoy, my husband was already on the Pacific, between Japan and the United States. And the one who cabled him the news was Governor-General Roosevelt: 'It's a boy.' My husband was not a very religious man but he had a great devotion to the Virgin of the Miraculous Medal; he used to wear her medal. And Ninoy was born on November 27, the feast of the Miraculous Medal."

But Ninoy Aquino would always say he was born "during a crisis," the crisis over the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Bill.

With the 1930s had come impatience over the independence question, not only among the masses, who steamed off frustration in wild movements extolling revolt and the Japanese, but even among the educated, who might not be hungering for independence but did want the question resolved. After two decades of the Nacionalistas, the "national aspiration" was still but the air on which political ambitions ballooned; the campaign for independence, hooted the Democrats, should be taken away from the politicians. The Depression had made hard times in the United States the ripe time to press the campaign to a finish, for the great factory that had been so happily dumping its product on the islands now protested each grain of sugar and each drop of oil trickling in from there. Poor Brodington was whimpering to be protected from Lilliput.

Nevertheless, when he sent still another independence mission to Washington in 1932, Quezon could not have expected it to get anything — or he would have gone himself. Still in power in Columbia were the Republicans, traditionally against independence for the Philippines; and they were, moreover, too clearly about to be repudiated in that year's polls to dare decide so important a matter as the abolition of a colony. But the 72nd American congress, repudiated indeed in November 1932, though not to be unseated until March 1933, proved to be a lame duck with a bold swan song. It had two Philippine independence bills: the Hare bill in the House and the Hawes-Cutting bill in the Senate, both of which provided for a transition period of graduated quotas and tariffs before the grant of independence. Together, these two measures became the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Bill that offered the Philippines independence in ten years. Not immediate, therefore, and not complete or absolute either (the American bases were to stay), but still the closest any mission had got to a definite independence date. So, what was merely an umpteenth independence mission suddenly loomed as the bus of history, its code name Osroxo already sounding immortal, and its two leaders, Osmeña and Roxas, increasing in stature as the potential fathers of Philippine freedom.

Quezon was aghast. He ordered the missionaries to come home; they refused. He warned that there were no more funds for them; they said they would make do with what they had. He told them that the bill they were working for was objectionable because of its provision for U.S. bases; they reminded him how often he had spoken in favor of those bases in the past. He was invited to join them in Washington, but this would have been humiliating: to go there and be allowed to share in their glory. Instead, he decided to send "his most trusted emissary," Aquino. The Aquino star had been rising even faster since the period before the 1931 elections, when Speaker Roxas had started a buy-native movement, the Bagong Katipunan, that made Quezon suspect that his protégé was striking out on his own, instigated by Osmeña. During the Osrox mission, its correspondent in Manila was Quínoval, which stood for Quezon and Aquino plus Speaker pro tempore Antonio de las Alas. Had Aquino replaced Roxas as his apparent? At any rate, when Don Manuel wanted the Hare-Hawes-Cutting and Osrox stopped, it was Senator Aquino he sent to do it.

The senator sailed on the Empress of Canada towards midnight of November 14, 1932. At the farewell luncheon for him at the Manila Hotel, a message from Quezon, then ailing, was read:

"I have appealed to the patriotism of the illustrious leader of the majority in the Senate, my friend Senator Aquino, to place the dictates of public duty over and above all consideration of his family or personal interests, and to go to Washington on a special mission for the Legislature. Senator Aquino carries with him the instructions of the Legislature, defining clearly the stand of that body with regard to the bills that concern our country, now pending in the Senate of the United States. There exists a perfect understanding of ideas between us... I understand the sacrifice imposed on Senator Aquino in abandoning his wife, who is now in a delicate state. I have so much faith, however, in his ability, in his patriotism and in his experience, that I have been forced to ask him to be the envoy to carry the instructions. I wish him a happy trip and complete success; and I ask that we offer a toast to Mrs. Aquino, the distinguished wife of the senator, who shares the sacrifice imposed on him by public duty."

Obviously, Quezon believed his "understanding" with Aquino to be so perfect he could safely send the senator to fight his original patron, Osmeña.

In his farewell speech, Aquino replied to those in the press who asked why he had been chosen to take the place of Quezon when he did not know English. Though not educated under the American system, shrugged the senator, with his experience in government he could still be useful:

10 Lichauco, Roxas, p. 97.
11 Tribune, November 15, 1932.
Another Philippine measure pending in the American Senate was a bill by Senator William King providing for immediate Philippine independence; and one instruction to Aquino was to try to shift the Osrox mission's support to the King bill.

"The day following my arrival in Washington I had an interview immediately with Senator King. I told him the preference of the Philippine Legislature for his bill, since it reflected the desire of the people to obtain their absolute and immediate independence in the shortest time possible. Senator King answered that under the present circumstances it was impossible to have his bill approved but that he foresaw the approval of another bill which did not totally agree with his desires.

"However, he opined that it would be much more favorable for the country to take advantage of all the advantages being offered.

"The decision of Senator King to submit his bill to the floor as an amendment in substitution to the bill under discussion is known to all. I encouraged him, saying that the Filipino people would be highly grateful to him if he made all efforts to have his bill voted on; and moreover there would be a categorical expression of the will of the Senate with respect to each measure.

"So, Senator King presented his bill as a substitute amendment and, in spite of the brilliant and eloquent speech he delivered, there were hardly a pair of votes given in favor of his proposed measure. Therefore, I focused my attention on the amendments to the provisions of the bill [Hare-Hawes-Cutting] pending approval in order to adjust it as much as possible to the wishes of the Legislature, and more specifically to the points of view of the majorities in both chambers."

This refuted the story that he switched sides on the very day he arrived and straightway cabled Quezon urging him to accept the Hare-Hawes-Cutting. All he said in his cable, after his first talk with King, was that the missionaries were "disposed to do everything possible to satisfy the desires of the Legislature" and that Senator King was pessimistic about the chances of his bill but was urging that "we should not waste this opportunity to get the best bill possible." Came the Quezon reply: "Acceptable legislation or nothing."

Since by "acceptable legislation" Quezon presumably meant, as in his earlier cable, a grant of immediate independence, which the Hare-Hawes-Cutting did not offer, and which had become impossible through the King bill, it seems odd that Quezon should then order the Legislature to ratify the instructions to Aquino, instructions dealing with the "unacceptable" Hare-Hawes-Cutting. In one breath Quezon said immediate independence or nothing, and in the next breath he wanted Aquino to follow the instructions on "nothing." But even the Legislature now thrilled to the prospect of independence at last and preferred to wait and see what would result from the brewings of the Messrs. Hare, Hawes, Cutting, Osrox and Aquino.
Aquino did continue working for amendments in the bill, conferring with Hawes, conferring with King, conferring with Cutting, conferring with Pittman, and all the time keeping Quezon notified of every step he took — and there was no squawk from Manila that he was not following instructions. The dialogue by cable would surely have stopped, otherwise, with a puñeta from Quezon.

On December 17 the U.S. senate passed the bill and returned it to him lower house, which rejected the senate amendments. The bill then went to conference committees for harmonizing. Quezon was, of course, lissayed that the bill had passed the senate at all — but still no accusation of Aquino. He merely told Aquino to make sure that the bill required its acceptance by the Philippine Legislature. Aquino replied that the provision for such a requirement was still in the bill: “If worst comes, I will concentrate my efforts on keeping it intact in the final bill.” He had made a memorandum summarizing the wishes of the Legislature. “On the morning of December 21 I personally delivered to each member of the conference committee a copy of the memorandum which I submitted to Congress in compliance with the wishes of the Legislature. . . . The conference committees of the house and senate of the United States came to an agreement on December 22, and I considered such agreement satisfactory. In the following sessions of Congress, that agreement was adopted by both houses.”

Now at last came the puñeta from Quezon: “I knew it before you left. Legislative instructions were to support King bill primarily.” That cable, Aquino would say, “produced in me certain doubts.” Why was Quezon still insisting on the defunct King bill “when I knew perfectly well, and from my own statements, the point of view of the Senate president about his impossibility of obtaining from whichever administration immediate, complete and absolute independence”? Yet Quezon now spoke of getting a better deal from the incoming Democrats. Had Quezon not noticed that the Democrats, in their winning platform, had changed their old cry of immediate independence for the Filipinos to a “simple recognition of the promise to give the Philippines its independence”?

On Christmas week, 1932, the Philippine independence bill was finally approved by the American congress, to become the most controversial Yule gift in our history.

Aquino had cabled Quezon that the bill about to be passed met ninety per cent of your personal point of view” and that its enactment would make the Filipino people realize “the efforts you made to secure his best accomplishment of our cause under the circumstances.” This was sure consuelo de bobo as far as Quezon was concerned; the Philippines would gain its independence through a law identified with him but with Osmeña, Roxas and Aquino. And when the Hare-Hawes-Cutting passed the U.S. congress, Aquino heard that “the desire of President Quezon was for President Hoover to veto it.” The senator dashed off another cable explaining that, as he was on the scene and possessed reliable information, he thought it his duty to ask Quezon earnestly to help in the campaign to get the bill signed, stressing, however, that he had made no compromise and that the bill, when it became law, would still require acceptance by the Legislature; his desire, in fact, was that the Legislature should have ample opportunity to consider the bill. Aquino was now frankly for the Hare-Hawes-Cutting and had with Osmeña and Roxas jointly signed a letter to the U.S. secretary of war (whose office was in charge of the Philippine colony) requesting his help in getting the bill signed into law.

As expected, however, President Hoover vetoed the bill — and Quezon made a last try to stop Osmeña and Aquino, biddning them abide by the veto because a better bill could surely be won from the incoming Democratic president, Delano Roosevelt. Osmeña and Aquino played deaf and continued campaigning, this time for a congressional vote to override the veto. Quezon must have felt utterly bereaved; first Roxas, and now Aquino, had turned against him, both captured by that eternal antagonist, Osmena, the man protected by God. Both houses of congress overrode the Hoover veto. Hare-Hawes-Cutting became law, subject to the approval of the Filipino people. A raging Quezon denounced the law as “un-Christian.” Most un-Christian, certainly, to his friends the sugar barons, the fiercest enemies of the independence law.

In March 1933, Roosevelt already inaugurated, Quezon departed for Washington, declaring that he would get “a better bill of independence.” But what he got in Washington was the cold shoulder. Roosevelt was too busy to see him; the secretary of war was too busy to see him; and when he approached an outstanding champion of Philippine independence, Senator Joseph T. Robinson, he got told off.

According to Teodoro Kalaw, who got it from the newspapers, what Robinson said to Quezon was:

“You admit having worked 25 years for immediate independence, yet when you thought it was coming, you ran away from it and asked instead for independence after ten years. In compliance with your wishes, we give you now a ten-year independence law. Again you are running away from it, this time alleging that what you want is immediate independence. This game has been played once too often. . . . Here is your independence law — take it in good faith or leave it, as you please; but if you reject it now, we promise you nothing but to do by you as you deserve.”

According to another Theodore (Friend), Robinson was even blunter than reported:

“Quezon, excited and gesturing, pictured the ignominious position of a future Philippine president, surrounded by American flags and

13Aide-de-Camp to Freedom, p. 244.
American bases at Cavite and Fort McKinley. Majority Leader Joseph Robinson interrupted him: 'Why don't you come clean and be frank? We believe you don't want independence. If so, why don't you say so?' Leaning forward and pointing a finger at the speechless Quezon, Robinson told him to 'go ahead and do what you want with the bill in the Philippines. We will do our duty here as we see it.' 14

Finally it looked as if Osrox had won. On April 25, at the Willard Hotel, Quezon signed an agreement to recommend acceptance of the law by the Legislature, with modifications in the bases and trade provisions. The peace was fleeting. Quezon repudiated the pact; to the anxious in Manila who had heard of his 'capitulation' he sent word that he was still
anti Hare-Hawes-Cutting. The coalition was on the rocks; the Partido Nacionalista Consolidado was splitting into Pro and Anti.

Aquino arrived back in Manila ahead of the others, on March 19, 1933. Among those who met him at the pier was a delegation of Centro Escolarinas. Did those girls, quipped Aquino, want independence or sugar? He greeted a bureau director with: "Haven't they kicked you out of your post yet? They have already kicked me out!" To those who harped on immediate independence he remarked that, since the Philippines had waited four hundred years for freedom, it could surely wait ten years more. And to those who attacked the bases provision he said: "Show me a single independence bill that did not contain such a provision." Yet none of those objecting now had objected before. In fact, Aquino would dig up a document showing that Quezon not only had favored naval reservations but had even offered them to the United States in exchange for immediate independence. 15

As the first big Pro in the field, Aquino drew the initial fire of the Antis. The joke they circulated was that Aquino had gone abroad as an envoy of Quezon but had come back the en-boy of Osmaña. He was saying no to the Osrox bill when he left but said yes when he got to Washington. "Aquí, no, Allá, sí!" And the acting president of the Senate, José Clarín, accused Aquino of having carried out none of the instructions of the Legislature. "If Clarín said that," retorted Aquino, "he must be ignorant and not deserving to be president pro tempore. Ninety per cent of the instructions have been complied with." He added that he was formerly convinced there was intelligent leadership under President Quezon but had returned to find there was none: "His leadership is not intelligent at all." The shooting war was on, although Quezon and the Osrox mission had still to arrive.

Just as soon as he was back, Aquino began the town-by-town and province-by-province campaign that would take him all over the country, to explain why the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act should be accepted and to defend himself and Osrox from the charge that they had not followed the instructions of the Legislature.

He stuck to his contention that ninety per cent of those instructions had been carried out successfully:

The instructions were to seek a transition period before independence not longer than ten years; ten years was the transition period in Hare-Hawes-Cutting. The instructions were to make the limitations on Philippine sugar and oil be based on the proposals of the Hare bill rather than of the Hawes-Cutting bill; this was done. The instructions were to eliminate the so-called Forbes amendments, which might create conflicts between the Commonwealth president and the American high commissioner; those amendments were "practically" eliminated by revisions limiting the authority of the high commissioner. The instructions were to refuse any plebiscite on independence; the provision for such a plebiscite had been stricken from the bill. The instructions were to demand a definition of the naval bases; such a definition was inserted, clarifying that the American president could designate as naval bases only the existing ones and no more, which, within two years after independence, would have to be redesignated or be presumed abandoned. The instructions were to get into the bill the Philippine suggestions on the sugar and immigration quotas; not all those suggestions could be got in, but the original quota provisions had been altered to conform with those suggestions.

Item by item, over and over again during his odyssey, a tireless Aquino showed how the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act incorporated the instructions of the Legislature, where a faction would now reject the law on the pretext that those instructions had been ignored. On two provisions of the law — English as the language of the public schools; and the amount of sugar that could enter the United States duty-free — it had not been possible to make any changes; but the first provision did not exclude the use of another language or of native dialects in the public schools, while the other provision, which had aroused angrier opposition, was already beyond remedy, said Aquino, when he arrived in Washington, having been approved by the American congress. But why, asked Aquino, should the independence law be rejected on the ground that it would ruin the sugar industry? Did Filipinos want to be rich or did they want to be free? If they wanted to become rich first before becoming free, then why the demand for immediate, complete and absolute independence? 16

"There are certain elements in the country," said the senator, "who advocate independence, who talk about independence, but who do not

14Between Two Empires, p. 111.
15Tribune, June 28, 1933.
16The Aquino apologia is summarized in Sacrificio a cumbio de libertad, a pamphlet published in 1933.
really want independence. What they do want is to hold on to their jobs in the government for as long a time as possible.”

He did not blame the small fry who dared not raise a voice in favor of the independence law, for “such was the terror that existed among the government people that by their every act and look might be seen an atmosphere of terror.” It was the big fish that drew his invective, as one memoir recalls: “When Mr. Quezon did not like the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Independence Act in 1933, Mr. Aquino thought he did not like independence and called him ‘double-faced.’”

During his campaign Aquino revealed that just before he left for Washington he had been told by Quezon himself that neither the King bill nor immediate independence had a chance in the American congress. Yet the instruction was to work for the King bill or immediate independence. This was to convince him, said Aquino, that what Quezon really wanted was no independence law for the time being.

The Antis, of course, unmoved by Aquino’s marathon apologia (his campaign tour lasted from March to June, 1933) and continued to accuse him of having betrayed his mission. One Anti declared that Aquino had carried out only one instruction: the instruction to get Malacanang designated as the residence of the Filipino president, not of the American high commissioner, as the Americans were intending to do.

“Granting that Senator Aquino should be wholly credited for this, it is so insignificant that [even that credit] is not given him.” A Filipino-occupied Malacanang could not have seemed so insignificant, especially then, as a symbol of autonomy; but the Antis were bent on whitewashing Aquino’s performance in Washington.

What could not be whitened away was the paradox that placed his motives beyond question. Here was a man fighting for an independence law that the sugar men feared would ruin them, though he was himself a sugar man, a big planter — “listed as No. 1 on the roll of planters of the Central Azucarera de Tarlac” and sending in “more cane for milling every year than any other Tarlac sugar planter.”

Yet long before the Cubans’ Sin cuota y sin amo, Aquino was already taking that stand. Did we want freedom or sugar? “It is true,” said he, “that some sugar centrals are opposed to the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act because it will affect their production. As for me, the very central in which I am interested, in my province, grinds out 34,000 tons a year. This central may stop producing sugar; it may export not even a single ton — but I will still work for the acceptance of the bill because I am convinced it will be for the best interests of the country.” When exporters whined that the law would lose them the American market, Aquino, with pardonable sarcasm, remarked that nowhere in the law were Filipinos forbidden to seek other markets for their products. He argued that sugar limitation, instead of ruining the economy, might actually promote it: “The disappearance of the sugar industry is needed to arouse the country so it will go into manufacture and other industries; the country imports millions of pesos’ worth of textiles and canned goods and other necessities that could be produced here. The centrals, once they stop milling, could produce paper and alcohol and other needs of the country, or they could be transformed into canneries.”

But Aquino was speaking at a time when manufacture was a dirty word: too much trouble to go into when one could buy a package of Piedmont or a bar of Babe Ruth for a few centavos. The Japanese would later ask with a sneer why a tobacco and sugar country like the Philippines had to import American cigarettes and candy.

When Aquino returned from the stump, the Pros in government were under siege. He had charged that Governor-General Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., had been instructed by Hoover to “kill” the Hare-Hawes-Cutting in the Philippines. Whether this was true or not, the government-general did allow himself to be used as a tool by Quezon in a “reorganization” of the government that replaced Pros with Antis. Among those who got the ax were President Rafael Palma and Dean Maximo Kalaw of the state university and the secretary of the interior, Honorio Ventura, a legend in the heartland because of his benefactions. Ventura (who joined Aquino on the stump) had a memorable exit line, supposedly spoken to Quezon, as a taunt to those who enrich themselves in public office. Said Don Honorio: “Entré en la política camisado y salgo descamisado.” The ousting of President Palma from the University of the Philippines particularly appalled Aquino.

The words that expressed his anger then are still pertinent: “President Palma is accused of the heinous crime of having pronounced himself in favor of the Independence Act. His attitude has been qualified as partisan. How can the struggle for liberty be partisan? How can the struggle in the field of intellectual discussion be partisan, considering the responsibility of each and every Filipino to ponder this act of the American congress that has left in our hands the determination to be free or not?

“We have invested millions of pesos in order to provide our country with the highest cultural institutions, such as the University of the Philippines. And if in a delicate, serious and transcendental moment for the

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17Tribune, March 22, 1933.
19Tribune, July 29, 1933.
18Sacrificio a cambio de libertad, p. 7.
19Representative Ramon Diokno; Tribune, March 20, 1933.
20Brochure of the Department of Agriculture & Commerce, 1940; p.3.
nation like the present one, when all, absolutely all, Filipinos should reflect, to determine the road that we must take for our definite emancipation, or our perpetual slavery; if on a question like this, that University where the blood of our youth is seething, the youth which is the flower of the mentality of the race, is to produce nothing but a chorus of praisers and censer bearers among its professors as among its students, instead of responding to the call of the supreme moment by means of courageous and unlimited expression of ideas, then I will be the first to ask for the abolition of that institution. And I would have my tongue cut off first before I gave my vote for the maintenance of that university.

"It does not matter to me if the fury of the typhoon that is being released from the heights of our political world struck that university or the respectable head of President Palma. What matters to me is that we preserve the free expression of sentiment and conviction. In this is real democracy."26

When he spoke, the fury of the typhoon was about to break over his head. The lord of the party was manufacturing a thunderbolt — or, rather, two thunderbolts, one for each legislative chamber. Quezon intended to launch a major reorganization of both houses without a general election, a move which certainly had no precedent in Philippine parliamentary history, as Quezon later admitted. His object was clearly to remove opponents from key positions in both houses: Osmeña as president pro tem of the Senate, Roxas as Speaker of the House, Pedro Sabido and Benigno Aquino as 'majority' floor leaders in House and Senate. The first showdown, then, would be neither on the independence question nor at the polls; it would be on party leadership and in the Legislature.27 The signal for the coup in the House was given in the Senate by Quezon, who got so rattled by Senator Aquino he skidded from cool English to hot Spanish. "On the day Senate President Quezon denounced Speaker Roxas on the floor of the Senate, he started his speech in beautiful English. When Mr. Aquino scored him in the course of an interpellation, the Senate head forgot himself, deserted Shakespeare and returned to Cervantes."28 Roxas was toppled from the Speakership on July 20, 1933. Quezon then shifted the fight to the Senate. He and Osmeña both submitted their resignations from the two top posts of the chamber; in a vote of confidence the Senate rejected Quezon's resignation, then accepted Osmeña's. The Pros had been ousted from the party; Aquino was replaced as floor leader.

The game of Hare & Hounds was then resumed. Should the independence law be acted on by the Senate or by the nation? The Pros were for,

the Antis against, a plebiscite — naturally, since Quezon had said that he would "vote against the law even if the entire Filipino people should favor it"?29 The adage had been revised: not vox populi but vox Quezon was vox Dei. The plebiscite proposal was defeated; the Hare-Hawes-Cutting was submitted to the Senate, which, on October 6, "declined to accept the Act." The vote was fifteen to four. Just fifteen men — actually just one man — had decided for the nation a "delicate, serious and transcendent" question. Quezon had hunted down and killed the "un-Christian" Hare.

The next year he went to Washington and came back with news of great joy: he had succeeded in winning an independence that was not immediate, complete or absolute either. The Tydings-McDuffie, Quezon's catch, was an independence law so twin to the Hare that spotting distinctions between them might baffle a Proust. No wonder that Osroox and Aquino had no difficulty in accepting this bunny by its new or any other name. Besides, they could claim credit for it, if only because they had forced Quezon's hand. Sugar could have kept independence a question mark indefinitely; but when the prize was almost grabbed by his rivals, Quezon had to hustle in earnest, sugar happy or not happy. Only he had that leverage. What Osroox and Aquino could not do, he did. He made the sugar men gulp down an independence law.

If Aquino accepted this without rancor it was because his attitude then was already what he would maintain during the war: that it didn't matter where independence came from, as long as it came. Today's activists will be interested to learn that, during the Hunting of the Hare, Benigno Aquino popularized a phrase grown hackneyed now but startling and almost treasonable then, when he accused Quezon of "acting as a tool of American imperialism here."

24Tribune, July 27, 1933.
26Mangahas, Frontline Man.
IN MID-JANUARY, 1935, the "aristocracy of the Philippine bar" gathered at the Manila Hotel to feast a vintage year in law: 1914. For the celebrators it was the 20th anniversary of their bout with the bar exams of 1914, when the mortality rate was a record 84%. But the happy few who made it were to make history. The anniversary banquet brought together paladins from rival camps, armor doffed for the agape. Present was Benigno Aquino with such fellow Tomasinos as Manuel Morán of the judiciary and José Avelino of the Senate. Present were Secretary Teófilo Sison of the cabinet and Undersecretary Jorge Vargas. Present were the two new Quezon protégés, Claro M. Recto, who had left the Opposition to chair the constitutional convention, and José Yulo, whose star had risen during the Pro-Anti fight and in whom Don Manuel now saw a Speaker and potential President. There, too, was Natividad Almeda López, second Filipina to pass the bar and the first to practise law. And in the company were such other personages as Judges Jugo and Peña, Convention Delegates Francisco and López, Dean Lacson, and Attorneys Goyena, Azárraga, Escudero and Mañalac.

Also in attendance were a couple of the 1914 examiners, at liberty now to discuss that ordeal. One of them, Judge Opisso, declared that he had been strict on purpose: to produce this rarefied group now so eminent in public life. The examiner in civil law, Atty. Blanco, revealed that not he but Chief Justice Arellano himself had prepared the text of that particular test, which, when entrusted to him, Examiner Blanco had hidden in his shoes: "And to ensure that nobody read those questions, not even my wife, I slept with my shoes on!" Senator Aquino recalled that of the 350 who took it only 160 hurdled the test on civil law.

And so the night passed in reminiscence as the famous looked across
a table at a landmark of their youth. "Fun and ralillery marked the banquet, with all contributing to the amusement." 1

Nostalgia widened the 20-year distance from the formality of Empire Days to the modishness of the '30s. In between had been the 1920s, when a flamboyant people had somehow been regimented into timid white suits for the men, pastel frocks for the women; they had been told that vivid colors were not for dark skins and a hot climate. This colonial livery, aptly called the Americana, quite suited the educated Filipino then, who was growing more timid and provincial when he thought himself becoming so "modern" and "progressive." But his ideas of modernity and progress had narrowed to the American model; even his mind wore a monotonous uniform. The cultured Filipino of the 1980s (as can be proved by any figure of the Propaganda) was intellectually at home in several worlds: Europe, Spanish America, the Orient (there was a special interest in Japan), not to mention the classic world of the hexameter; and his frame of reference had a latitude unthinkable in the "educated" Filipino of the '20s and '30s, for whom culture had been reduced to being knowing about the world contained between Hollywood and Manhattan.

Looking back, one sees how hollow was the boast that the American influence released the Filipino from age-old inhibitions; one has only to compare his prim colonial livery then with the bold-striped camisa of his grandfather or the red, red shirt of a teenager of the '60s to realize that the American-day Filipino was timider than the Filipino who had gone before or the Filipino who would come after. The clothes that unmade the man also unmade the Filipino, for along with timidity and provincialism grew the indifference to the Philippine past. One prominent intellectual, editor of an admired weekly, would lament in postwar years (when nationalism was ascendant) that he knew nothing at all of Philippine history: he had been "brainwashed" during his schooling in the 20's. For his generation, Philippine history practically began with Dewey; everything that went before, except the Revolution, was but darkness and superstition. As late as the '50s, an account of the elegance of Lipa society during coffee days could provoke incredulous readers to assert that the elegance must be mythical because Filipinos then (mid 19th century) were still so naive and backward. One woman writer would remark, apropos the Naval de Manila, that she lived for years in Intramuros without noticing the feast. The alienated moved in a world where such survivals had become invisible.

The alienation informs Philippine writing in English, which is based on a native but on the Anglo-American literary tradition. The result is a literature that is most American when it seems most Philippine, as a famous example will illustrate. One of the best stories of the period, The Son of Rizal, by our greatest writer in English, José García Villa, looks completely, even egregiously Philippine but on inspection turns out to be a transliteration of Sherwood Anderson's Brothers. The force of the influence was not Villa's fault; given the culture he was exposed to, he could not have escaped such influences, especially since he was, by the switch in language, denied the counter-force of the older native literary tradition. He should have been in the line of succession from Recto and Rizal but, by an accident of history, became a descendant of Sherwood Anderson. What was lost can be defined by another illustration. In the late '30s, T. S. Eliot began to be locally read and aroused an interest in the metaphysical and symbolist methods. But both already existed in the Philippine literary tradition, the first through the influence of the Spanish mystics (Teresa de Avila, Juan de la Cruz) and the second through such native poets as Fernando Marfa Guerrero, an avowed disciple of Rubén Darío, the Nicaraguan through whom the techniques of the French symbolists had entered Spanish — and Philippine — poetry. In other words, as early as the 1890s (or perhaps even earlier; there is a hint of Baudelaire in the "black" poems of Rizal) a Filipino, Guerrero, was already creating in a style that would not be discovered by Filipino writers in English until four decades later, roundabout through Eliot. They borrowed from abroad what they did not know they had at home; instead of a borrowing, it should have been, by then, a tradition and they could have been continuing not a foreigner, Eliot, but one of their own, Guerrero; but we had lost continuity, we had lost the traditions that give a culture density and resonance. Guerrero, for instance, and even Rizal were, as writers, to seem more alien to us than Sherwood Anderson or T. S. Eliot. It could be pointed out that the foreign influences (Russian gloom, French decadence) that worked on Anderson and Eliot were balanced by a native literary tradition (Hawthorne, Mark Twain, Henry James); but there was no such balancing of influences for the Filipino writer in English, for whom the previous writers in Spanish simply did not exist. The lack of native ancestors explains why our culture in American was so tame and hick.

With the 1930s, however, came a more spirited mimicry. The change showed in brief rebellions against the white drill suit expressed by the "polo" shirt, the Hawaiian shirt, and the McCoy style (black or dark-blue under white), though a folk-culture hero, Kenkoy of the vernacular comics, had already shown how to make white gaudy — and thus outrage the meekness of the national uniform. The flamboyance of Kenkoy's livery has for equivalent the embroidery on the scarlet letter. Liberating influences, too, were vaudeville and cabaret, where Filipino girls first appeared with painted faces, bobbed hair and stark-hued costumes. Through the 1920s, a girl with "make-up" on was automatically assumed to be an artista of vaudeville or a cabaret bailarina. By the 1930s, lipstick

1 Philipines Herald, January 15, 1935.
and cut hair had become prevalent; and our society girls were arguing that it should be all right to wear a red dress as long as you "moved" in it.

The spiritedness reflected good times rather than any relief at the coming of autonomy with the Commonwealth. The American Depression had mostly spared the Philippines, where the '30s meant, not breadlines or bank failures, but a series of booms (the gold mine boom, the real estate boom) and an even greater voracity for American fads and fashions. The radio, as it turned portable, graduated from Rudy Valee and the Vagabond Lover to Dick Powell and By A Waterfall to Bing Crosby, starting the crooner era with Please. After the talkies (Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell warbling Sunny Side Up) the next event in cinema was air-conditioning; and Manilaos ostentatiously donned sweaters to watch Astaire & Rogers do the Carioca — which brought on a Latin-dance craze enhanced by Mr. Quezon when he made the tango practically the official dance of Philippine moguldom. The young ones (boy in sharkskin, double-breasted; girl in long bob, marcel-waved) moved on to swingtime, the new beat that had made syncopation obsolete, along with jazz bands and vaudeville. Vanished or in decline were the variety stars of the '20s: Vitang Escobar, Dimples, Katy de la Cruz, Toyoy; popular idols were now made by radio and Tagalog movies, as evidenced by the number of boys being called Roger (after Rogelio de la Rosa) or Pol (after Leopoldo Salcedo). Still unthreatened, despite the appearance of the first night clubs (Tom's Oriental Grill, the Ronda, the Trocadero), were the cabarets, for the great freemasonry of the Philippine male, the cabareteros, stayed as true in the '30s as in the '20s to their two chief temples, the Sta. Ana and the Maypajo, at either end of Manila's streetcar line. Subdivision and realtor became native idiom with the development of Pasay, New Manila and Grace Park, hinterlands hitched up as suburbs; and candy speculators (Senator Aquino was one of them) would begin investing in even remoter backwoods like Marikina and Montalban, already foreseeing the shape to come of Greater Manila.

All this bespoke a confidence that was deceptive, as illusory as the gold mine boom of the mid-'30s, when paper profits made and unmade millionaires and most of the "mining" was done on the Escolta. Four months after Senator Aquino and his Class of 1914 gathered to reminisce on the twenty years gone past, the Sakdal rose in revolt in the heartland. "The uprising," says Teodoro Agoncillo, "was aimed at frustrating the holding of the plebiscite on . . . the Tydings-McDuffie Law and thus prevent the establishment of the Commonwealth. The uprising failed, but it was itself a serious warning that the deplorable condition of the peasants could not be remedied by a resort to rifles and bayonets." The social justice program that Quezon would enunciate was to remain an empty if catchy slogan because, says Agoncillo, Quezon was "surrounded by landlords and vested interests on whom he depended."

Theodore Friend observes that Quezon's social justice "served more to enhance his own popularity than to elevate the standard of living among the people"; after the Sakdal revolt, Philippine radicalism would move "into an era of more sophisticated protest" and the coalition of the leftist parties into a Popular Front just before the war is as good an indicator as any of how far a government run by Filipinos had failed to make revolution unnecessary: "The Commonwealth of the Philippines from 1935 to 1941 enjoyed one of the earliest genuine possibilities of economic decolonization in modern history, but in those six years one finds little economic development externally stimulated or natively sought. The chief concern was for political decolonization; the ideal was an autonomy that would keep uncut the economic ties with America.

The Sakdal scare hastened the re-union of the split Nacionalistas. At a growl from the mob the oligarchs fell into each other's arms. Alarm had been mounting since the elections of 1934, when the Sakdal, our first effective proletarian party, showed unexpected strength at the polls. "This uneasiness was caused not merely by the apparent birth of an opposition party which was really beyond the control of the dominant classes, but more particularly by the widespread popular endorsement that the bitter attacks of this group upon the ruling party, its leaders and its policies apparently had received." As the prime targets of Sakdal wrath, Quezon and Osmeña began to feel too unsafe to wish to continue divided. "Both parties were thoroughly opposed to and more than a little in fear of the numerous and increasing body of citizens, mainly the 'havennots,' who had never counted very heavily in Philippine politics. As it became probable, however, that the stabilizing force of American authority would be withdrawn . . . those politically forgotten men assumed a larger, and none too pleasing, place in the consciousness of those who controlled the major political parties. Thus, after the elections of 1934, nothing of importance kept the Quezon and Osmeña wings of the Nacionalista Party apart; a number of powerful forces tended to drive them together." To save face, their re-union was made to appear as an obeying of the popular will. A "spontaneous" movement of "independent citizens" led by former Finance Secretary Miguel Unson prepared the reconciliation. "The situation is critical," said Unson, "and we cannot afford to waste our energies in petty quarrels and dissensions. What we need is unity." After two months of matchmaking, "accompanied by sufficient publicity to accustom the public mind to the idea," the Unson
group came up with a manifesto urging a coalition on Quezon and Osmeña, who, of course, found the idea not displeasing, though they were playing coy. By early 1935, everyone knew that the short-lived Osmeña opposition party was to be swallowed up again by the Quezon ruling party. It was a coalition impelled by fear that would breed more fear.

Warned Senator Juan Sumulong: “After the coalition, the deluge.” Although even the debate on the independence laws, said Sumulong, had been reduced to a question of “whether Osmeña or Quezon should direct our public affairs,” the resulting schism had been hailed in the hope that it might bring about the desired disintegration of the political oligarchy that had completely dominated our national politics for a quarter of a century.” A Quezon-Osmeña split made possible a two-party system and an effective Opposition. But a Quezon-Osmeña coalition would mean the restoration of the “feared and detested oligarchy” and the continuation of a “farcical representative government,” farcical because it was exclusively of the intelligentsia and the plutocracy, in which “the needy classes... have neither voice nor vote, even as minorities, in the formulation of policy.” Such a situation would necessarily breed “a revolutionary opposition,” and such an opposition, said Sumulong, was already manifest in “the growth of Communism and the phenomenal spread of Sakdalism, which occurred when it became evident that there was to be no genuine opposition party.”

Sumulong spoke in late April, 1935; barely a week later the Sakdalrose in revolt and was crushed — had been deliberately, it seemed, allowed to rise in revolt that it might be crushed. And so it was over the dead bodies of peasants, one might say, that on June 16, 1935, Quezon’s Partido Nacionalista Consolidado and Osmeña’s Partido Nacionalista Pro Independencia met, in separate conventions, to ratify the fait accompli of coalition.

The Osmeñista convention, at the Opera House, was tumultuous. “The coalition plan narrowly escaped defeat when a near riot, supposed to have been engineered by people from opposing camps and by delegates not entirely in accord with the plan, was barely averted.” The meet was recessed, then resumed at three in the afternoon, but the confusion grew worse — until Senator Aquino took the floor in defense of the coalition and saved the day with “his brilliant speech” eulogizing both Quezon and Osmeña: “Those two leaders separated, they worked for independence, and together they labored for the same end.” Order was restored, and the convention ratified the coalition, and the nominated candidates (Quezon and Osmeña, of course) were approved by a near unanimous vote. “Thus,” commented the Tribune, “a formal minority no longer exists in the political field.”

To accentuate the alliance, Aquino was picked to proclaim Quezon’s candidacy, at an afternoon rally on July 20, a day dark with storm. Through windy rain rode or marched some 25,000 members of the allied parties, to the noise of no fewer than fifty brass bands, waltzing parading from the Mehan Garden to the brand-new Rizal Memorial Stadium, where, on the baseball diamond, they crowed round a bright-lit stage. “The Stadium presented a colorful scene, despite the lowering skies and frequent squalls, as delegations from forty provinces filled the stands and overflowed into the field... where they stood, reckless of the rain.” Senator Melanio Arranz presented Osmeña as the coalition candidate for vice-president of the Commonwealth; Osmeña made his acceptance speech and was cheered to the clouds. Then Aquino rose to explain the coalition.

When the Legislature accepted the Tydings-McDuffie Law, said Aquino, those who had fought for the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act bowed to the decision as putting an end to the heated political contest; their acceptance of the new law was proof that they had engaged in the fray only to seek the best way to obtain freedom. However, the doubt had spread that the provisions of the independence law would really be carried out. The “agitated masses” had to be reassured; therefore a group of citizens had campaigned for the coalition of the two major parties, to place beyond doubt the intention of both parties to implement the Tydings-McDuffie Law.

Aquino then proclaimed Quezon the coalition candidate for president of the Commonwealth, after a rather strange introduction. “History teaches us,” began Aquino, “that every period in the struggle of a nation for emancipation demands a certain type of leadership. Rizal did not refuse to sacrifice his life on Bagumbayan to awaken his people from the lethargy that gripped them. He said: ‘Break open the bottle to release the perfume.’ The violent means employed by the sovereign power here in 1896 to perpetuate its hold on us justified the use of Bonifacio’s bolo in the name of liberty; there was no way to fight except with force.”

If the world of the present, concluded Aquino, required a leader versed in modern culture, one aware that the Philippines had been placed “at the crossroads of the commerce of vast and important seas” and could in no way evade “the influence of powerful nations,” the Philippines had such a man in him who would be “the only choice of his country during this first step towards complete liberty.”

Unhappily for the strong picture that Aquino painted of him, Mr. Quezon was not feeling well that afternoon and, while delivering his acceptance speech, became so weak he had to sit down and rest. A ver-

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6Hayden, p. 370.
7Tribune, June 18, 1935.
nacular poet was rushed in to fill the gap. Though the rally ended at half-past five, most of the crowd had to stay huddled in the stadium until late in the evening, stranded by the storm.

The elections were held in September, very nervously, for another uprising of the masses was expected. Those elections are usually remembered as a landslide win for Quezon, but can be read otherwise. Only about a million persons voted; of the votes for president, Quezon got 69%; Aguinaldo, 17.5%; and Aglipay, over 14%. "In short, despite all the electoral advantages enjoyed by the Coalition...more than 30% of the electorate refused to vote for Mr. Quezon and cast their ballots for candidates who...represented nothing except a violent protest against the President and all his works. To put it another way, one elector out of six voted for General Aguinaldo, one out of seven for Bishop Aglipay...This is a substantial minority, too large a one to be safely left without direct representation in the national government, especially as the majority of these voters are from a fairly definite class which feels that it is being exploited by the groups in power." The elections that ushered in the Commonwealth had brought into question the very value of elections. "In seeking stability through coalition, moreover, the dominant leaders and classes in the Philippines exposed themselves to another, although perhaps a less immediate peril: the danger that the dissatisfied minority, permanently unable to effect any real change in their rulers by ballot, might turn to force." Those words, contemporary with the Commonwealth, reveal the state of the "halcyon" days we were to call "peace-time."

Among those elected to the National Assembly was Benigno Aquino, reoccupying the deputy's seat for the second district of Tarlac. He was immediately made chairman of the commission on appointments, though he was to show that he still belonged to the "intransigent minority wing of the majority party." The advocate of coalition was presently at odds again with Quezon.

Disagreement came to a head in 1937, with the Cuevo-Barredo case, where a laudable concern for social justice on the part of Quezon was nevertheless hit by Assemblyman Aquino as an incursion into the realm of the judiciary. Still fresh in Aquino's mind was the "reorganization" of 1933, when the vengeful Quezon purge had not spared the courts; the precedent could not be allowed to become established practice in the Commonwealth. So; the President found himself being impugned in a controversy that was winning him sympathy, for the Cuevo-Barredo case was a labor dispute and Quezon was championing a victimized worker. On the other hand, Aquino, who had just resigned as chairman of the commission on appointments, seemed to be sticking his neck out again, by taking the unpopular side in a highly emotional case.

During the building of a twin span to the Ayala Bridge, a laborer named Anastacio Lozano was ordered by his foreman to jump into the river and retrieve a piece of lumber. The Pasig was in full flood and Lozano drowned. His mother, Mrs. Cuevo, sued Barredo & Company, her son's employer, but both the trial court and the Court of Appeals found against her and declined to adjudicate compensation. Quezon fulminated against this decision of what he called "16th century judges" and a newspaper got included in his wrath when it reported that he had threatened to "ask the National Assembly to suppress the judiciary in the Philippines." Forthwith, the Assembly joined in the chorus of praise for Quezon and of curses for the courts. The righteous had found a scapegoat.

The first and, it seems, the only member of the Assembly to dispute the President was Aquino, who pointed out that the courts could only act according to existing laws. If the laws were 16th century, the judges could not remake them to conform with more enlightened times.

"We should not try," said Aquino, "to induce members of the judicial branch to become legislators; neither should we blame them for the negligence or errors of the legislature. If the legislature has not paid attention to the needs of the community and has not risen to the occasion by passing adequate and timely laws, let us place the blame on the legislature and not upon members of the judiciary, who did nothing but interpret faithfully the spirit and letter of the existing law."

The words are poignant because they indicate a stage in the education of Benigno Aquino; he seems here to be speaking a mea culpa in behalf of all Philippine politicians, who had been, at best, too involved in the campaign for independence, or, at worst, too busy with the keeping of power, to pay attention to the needs of the national community and therefore had not risen to the occasion with the enactment of timely laws. They were guilty of negligence and error; the mea culpa lay in what I have done and what I have failed to do. So, while the President and the Assembly and their cohorts were loudly harrying a scapegoat, Aquino saw where the blame lay and did not hesitate to place it there, though himself implicated, disregarding the classic dictum that a politician is never defeated by the speech he does not deliver. In that moment when, all by himself, Aquino stood up to confess that their representatives had failed the people, Philippine politics had a conscience. As a result, the Assembly would announce that, in its next session, labor legislation would get priority.

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9Hayden, p. 427.
10Ibid., p. 426.
11Tribune, September 23, 1937. The accused newspaper was the Herald, whose staff members were barred from Palace press conferences.
12Tribune, September 26, 1937.
Of equal concern to Aquino was Quezon's attempt to dictate to the courts. However admirable the President's regard for social justice and however pure his intentions, he was still to be criticized for encroaching on judicial authority, a meddling that was dangerous because it could establish his power over the courts.

Said Aquino:

"If members of the judicial branch of government are obliged to place greater consideration on the political theories of the chief executive than on actual provisions of the law when deciding a case, we shall have a government of men and not of laws. The theory of the independence of the three branches of government is based fundamentally on the separation of jurisdiction and responsibility... What sort of jurisprudence would we produce in the Philippines if we had to consult the opinion of the chief executive every time a case is decided?" 13

To such objections Quezon had a startling answer. He declared that he was vested with "more extensive powers" than the president of the United States because he, unlike the American president, had sworn to "do justice to every man" and therefore had "not only the duty to do justice in cases where the decision rests with the Executive, but also to see that the other branches of government do not commit acts of injustice to any man." 14 In other words, Quezon saw his "duty" as transcending the "theory of separation of powers" or the "postulate of judicial independence."

It should therefore be a happy surprise, considering the pathos of the Lozano mishap, to learn that popular feeling was not wholly with Quezon in this case and that Assemblyman Aquino could be regarded as voicing a "bitter but largely suppressed public reaction" the gist of which was that the issue was not social justice but the abuse of power, because "the President had (1) violated the independence of the judiciary, and (2) had improperly commented on a case still under litigation." 15 For the Cuyo-Barredo case had been appealed to the Supreme Court and was therefore sub judice; and the President had been imprudent in making a scandal of it, though he would claim he had not known the case was still on appeal. But Aquino felt that the President should be called to account for "the impropriety of the method used and the inconsiderate nature of the treatment dispensed" as well as for "the ridicule of reputations achieved through many years of conscientious service in the judiciary." 16 When asked if Mr. Quezon could be impeached for his imprudence, Aquino replied that, although the President's misdeed was in certain respects a violation of the Constitution, it would be necessary first to prove that he had acted with malice before he could be impeached. "My honest and sincere opinion," deadpanned Aquino, "is that nobody could accuse the President of the Philippines of having acted maliciously." 17

As it turned out, the Supreme Court reversed the decision of the lower courts on the Cuyo-Barredo case; Mr. Quezon apologized to the judiciary; Aquino was vindicated — and then brought into line when the coalition, which dissatisfied Quezon because the two wings of the party continued as separate organizations, became, in September 1937, through Don Manuel's maneuverings, an actual fusion, which gave him the one-party government he wanted and restored to the clan its original name: Partido Nacionalista.

Aquino was again picked to personify the unity; he was made campaign manager for the 1938 elections, the first man in our history to act as the official campaign manager of a party. He had been persuaded not to run that year — which started people guessing that he had been cast in the scenario for 1941. "Probable cabinet changes have led to renewed speculations in political circles on the presidential election in 1941. Looking beyond into that year, political quarters believe that the major probability is that Vice-President Osmeña will succeed Quezon. The work of Assemblyman Aquino, campaign manager, in bringing about a closer-knit harmony in the party is given meaning in such quarters as a measure to pave the way for Osmeña to the presidency. At the same time it is stated that Aquino would have first call for the Speakership of the National Assembly in 1941. Mentioned for the vice-presidency are Roxas, Laurel, Secretary of Finance de las Alas and Secretary of the Interior Quirino. The belief is that the forthcoming island-wide trips of Aquino will bear specifically on the November (1938) elections and generally on the (1941) presidential elections." 18 Though this scenario was discarded after Quezon got something else he wanted (the constitutional amendments changing the six-year term for President without reelection into a four-year term with reelection), Aquino's "first call on the Speakership in 1941" remained in the script, making him potentially the fourth in the Nacionalistas' line of succession.

He was to clinch this position with his 1938 labors as campaign manager, a job he undertook with such gusto that wags dubbed him "the Jim Farley of the Philippines." 19 On an odyssey for the second time in his life, he rounded the country in five months — now getting a vote of confidence in Cagayan to pick the candidates there himself, now settling the intramurals in Bataan, now proclaiming candidates in the South, now

13Tribune, September 26, 1937.
14Hayden, p. 73.
15Mangahas, Frondline Man.
16Ibid.
17Tribune, September 29, 1937.
18Tribune, July 5, 1938.
19Tribune, November 12, 1938.
threatening with expulsion the party rebels in Samar and Isabela who might endanger his official candidates. For it was Aquino who drew up, practically singlehanded, the official list of Nacionalista candidates for the Assembly. Observed one Manila daily: “National Campaign Manager Aquino exercises vast powers as ‘trouble shooter’ for his party. His suggestions unless overruled by President Quezon will stand insofar as the party is concerned.” Quezon did the deciding when it came to his personal candidates, particularly Yulo and Paredes, handpicked for Speaker and floor leader, respectively — but “in many doubtful or politically significant cases, the actual decisions as to candidacies were made by Mr. Benigno Aquino, the Nacionalista campaign manager.” In 1938, Aquino was the party machine, so efficient that, of the 124 Nacionalista candidates who ran for the Assembly that year, only five were rebel candidates — and Aquino thought it was still five too many.

The fruit of his labors was an all-time record: his party swept every single one of the 98 Assembly districts.

Aquino had scored a 100% victory.

Quezon publicly congratulated him and, three weeks after the polls, named him to the cabinet, as secretary of agriculture and commerce. And Mrs. Quezon with her two daughters headed the party elite who journeyed to Tarlac for the victory ball in honor of their campaign manager and new cabinet man.

A special air-conditioned train with open bar and “luxurious dining cars” catered by the Manila Hotel carried the 600 prominentes to Tarlac town, where a torch parade conducted them from the railroad station to the auditorium built for the night. To the reception, which was a “dress affair,” came 5000 of the heartland’s principals.

It was Benigno Aquino’s proudest hour; he was 44 and at the peak of his career. Representante, Floor Leader, Senator, Assemblyman,— and now the title was Secretary. As he moved in light, the dark above twinkled with fireworks. Two open bars — one for the guests, the other for the public — had been installed inside and outside the ballroom, where, in the open air, the revelers danced till dawn. It was early December, 1938, and the tunes they danced to, besides the obligatory tango La Cumparsita (this was a political ball), were The Music Goes Round & Round, the Hawaiian-style Sweet Leilani, Bob Hope’s wicked Thanks For The Memory, and that horrid harbinger of a frenzy to come, A-Ticket A-Tasket, A Brown & Yellow Basket.

Swingtime was yielding to the shag, which would soon bring on the boogie-woogie.

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Shadow of Doubt

THE MERIDIAN of Aquino’s career was also his phase as “conventional politician,” if by the term is meant a politico identified with the interests of his party and his own ranking in it, both actual and potential. During this period — his time as campaign manager, his term in the cabinet — he was so wholly in the service of the reintegrated party that he could then have been correctly called Mr. Nacionalista, the title that would have belonged to Osmeña in earlier days. Aquino was, in fact, criticized during the 1938 campaign for being too impecable a party machine; he had defined as rebels those who “allowed themselves to be swayed by personal preferences rather than by party loyalty” and had warned those rebels that when they, in turn, should run for office they would realize “the error of their ways.”

The wily Quezon had gauged the value of this zeal and, when he put Aquino in the cabinet, was not merely rewarding a phenomenal campaign wizard but was enlisting the phenomenon in yet another cause: the constitutional amendments on the presidential tenure. Secretary Aquino did not disappoint the President, but chiefly because those amendments had become a cause of the party, championed even by Osmeña, who stood to lose from them, and therefore demanding “party loyalty.” So, during the controversy over the amendments, Secretary Aquino was reported to have “authorized the officials and employees under him to campaign for the amendments” and to have said that it was “the duty of everyone, once he is convinced that the amendments should be ratified, to go out into the streets and campaign, and campaign aggressively.”

For Aquino, this might have been an instance when party and personal interests coincided. During the campaign for the amendments,
which would make Quezon eligible for reelection in 1941, a clear impression was given that Don Manuel would not seek reelection and that the Quezon-Osmena team would skip the 1941 polls, presumably preferring to wait until 1945, when, with the termination of the Commonwealth, the prize at the polls would be the presidency of the Republic. So, for the younger men, 1941 loomed as their chance for the top. Speaker Yulo began to talk of as a presidential candidate for 1941. This was instantly countered by a Roxas-Aquino ticket. These two former rivals, Roxas and Aquino, had, since the days of Hare & Hounds, grown close to each other. They had become compadres; they had set up a joint mining corporation; they were partners in a law firm. Each was fondly called Tito (or Uncle) by the other’s children. If they worked so fervently for Mr. Quezon’s amendments it may have been on the understanding that they could try for the top posts in 1941. As it turned out, all the laborers in the amendment vineyard had only been fetching chestnuts out of the fire for Mr. Quezon. No sooner was the vote in than his candidacy (reelection in 1941) was being launched.

Such are the occupational hazards (fiasco and double cross) of politics. It should be said for Aquino that he turned “conventional” only when he thought that his prime obsession, independence, was already a settled question and he could safely concentrate on his own career. Before, he had preferred to identify himself, during election campaigns, not as Aquino, Nacionalista, but as Aquino, Independista; and each election campaign had cost him another hacienda. The costliest campaign of all — his fight for the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act — had forced him to mortgage his last considerable piece of property, the Tinang Hacienda; and neither the mining corporation nor the law firm, neither the seat in the Assembly nor the seat in the cabinet, had enabled him to pay off the mortgage.

His son Antonio explains why with an anecdote:

“Father was very strict about government money. When he was secretary of agriculture I was a playboy running around in a convertible Ford. One day I dropped in at his office and bought gasoline from the

department, where it cost only eight centavos a liter. The official rate in Manila was eleven centavos. When Father saw the voucher he called me to the office and, in the presence of the auditor, he said: ‘My son is neither the secretary nor a government official. He is not entitled to the eight-centavo rate. Please make him pay the difference right now.’ Mother could never use the official car except when representing him at social functions. She had her car, I had my car, only Father used the official car. I could not even brag about going to Malacañang to visit Baby or Nini Quezon in a No. 6 car. He never loaned it to me. He was very careful about government property. Although the car was his, he would not, because it carried a government plate and was certified as an official car, allow it to be used except on official business. I doubt if anyone can find a government voucher with his signature. He never collected his salary; he donated it, like to the Hospicio de San José. When I learned that he had spent his own money — some $20,000 — when he went on the independence mission for the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Act, I told him that on twenty thousand dollars I could have gone to Harvard. He said: ‘He who makes money spends his own money. So please don’t question how I spend my money.’

When he took over at the Department of Agriculture and Commerce, Secretary Aquino had “emphasized the need for courtesy” and had told the bureau chiefs that they would be “given more autonomy in their respective offices but would be directly responsible for their actions.” Then Executive Secretary Jorge Vargas recalls that Aquino as agriculture secretary was quite a chauvinist, especially in regard to the Japanese:

“He was strongly involved in the controversy over land leases to the Japanese in Davao, which he opposed. He was not sympathetic to the development of the Japanese influence in Davao. When Amang Rodríguez succeeded him as secretary of agriculture, he more or less followed Aquino’s policy. So, when the Japanese were, in 1942, about to enter Manila, there were three people very concerned about the records in Malacañang on decisions against the Japanese. These three were Aquino, Rodríguez and Senator Magallona (who had opposed Japanese immigration to the Philippines). What I did was burn all those records; we had no time to select; I was in charge of Malacañang then. I wish now I hadn’t burned them. The Japanese never bothered to look into those records.”

In 1939, during the renewed dispute over Philippine independence, Aquino decried the concern for the material benefits to be lost in the break with America; and got a mocking retort from Assemblyman Pedro Romero, whd sneered: “My distinguished friend, Secretary Aquino,

3The Roxas-Aquino movement was apparently strong enough to merit a common play of the time: an attack by a labor leader (in this case Juan Felen), which the Tribune saw as “inspired by political motives” and as “the first public shot against Roxas and Aquino, who are mentioned as a presidential ticket against Speaker Yulo and wherever will be the running mate.” (September 23, 1939) The team most mentioned for Yulo was another Quezon protégé, Quintín Paredes — a pairing that would make this utterly the Quezon ticket. By October 1939, the rival pairs were already quarreling over the appointments of election inspectors. The rivalry split the Quezon cabinet into two blocs. With Roxas and Aquino were Secretaries Almada Cuenco, Dococho and Avellino. “This bloc appears to be the more active of the two, its members being known to hold daily meetings...although the Yulo and Paredes team may have an edge in the control of the NP, with Yulo as the president and chairman of the party’s governing body, the national executive commission, while Paredes is the vice-president.” (Tribune, October 13, 1939)

4Tribune, November 29, 1938.

5Interview with Mr. Vargas; June 1972.
upbraids me for giving so much attention to material things. I am surprised that the secretary is wasting time in the Department of Agriculture. . . on such vulgar matters as trying to teach people to grow two blades of grass where one grew before, or importing high-breeds stallions for breeding purposes which it would be so much more to his temper to read poetry, classic orations and theses on human liberty. Romo's irony misfired, since Aquino could hardly be hit for wanting Filipinos to learn how "to make two blades of grass grow where one grew before" and how to breed better-grade cattle, and thus stop equating their material well-being with the skirts of Mother America.

The revival of a question he thought already settled could only dismay so staunch an independista and it is perhaps in the light, or lightning, of this exasperation that the later Aquino should be viewed. Too often had he found that people apparently as obsessed as he was with the winning of freedom had no wish to be freed; it was all just rhetoric in their mouths. The Hare-Haw's Cutting had been a national exposé, revealing how great were the forces mobilized against the independence movement. In his disgust Aquino had gone so far as to swear that, should Osmena, too, be won over to the side of those who would defeat the independence law, then he, Aquino, would abandon the Nacionalistas altogether. And who can blame him for having developed by then so extreme a mistrust that he could doubt even his idol? The establishment of the Commonwealth had lull'd his fears; the freedom movement now seemed irreversible. Yet, now, what had happened before was happening again: as freedom came within reach, its supposed coveters drew back — and joined in the exhortation to pause, to reflect, to reconsider before "we crucify our nation on the cross of an untimely independence." The Commonwealth had become the shadow of a doubt — to be precise, of a twin doubt. On the one hand were those like the Sakdal who doubted that the Commonwealth would ever culminate in independence; on the other hand were those like the sugar barons who doubted that the Commonwealth should be allowed to culminate in independence. And under this double shadow of doubt, what wonder if zealots like Aquino were vexed into holding all hope suspect, unless offered from a wholly new direction?

If his later actsuations are to be judged fairly, since the climate of the years just before the war should be taken into account, because he whose campaign for freedom added up to twenty years of frustrations may have been goaded by that climate of doubt into seeing more sureness in a different promise of freedom. What we guiltily choose to forget today (because it taints our picture as a people who had ever hungered to be free) is that the prewar period, 1939-41, was when the coming of independence became, not more and more certain, but less and less wanted. The pretext this time was the war in Europe; actually, even before Hitler marched into Poland, Filipinos were already talking of a permanent commonwealth, or dominion status, or even statehood for the Philippines, so effective had been the four decades of training the country to be a client state.

As early as December 1935, or right after the inauguration of the Commonwealth, the American publisher Roy Howard, after a visit with his friend Quezon, and evidently with Quezon's imprimatur, had run an article in Philippine and American newspapers in which he reported that "the dream of independence was already fading from Filipino minds" and that Filipinos "might turn to Great Britain for protection if the United States refused them dominion status." There was an outcry against the report; but: "Two former Philippine resident commissioners favored it, and so did Filipino businessmen. A radical labor leader emphasized: 'If independence means only happiness for Quezon, Osmeña, Roxas and the rich .. . to hell with such independence!'" When Paul McNutt, a Democrat but Jingoes imperialist, became high commissioner to the Philippines he was only too happy to pick up the cue. "Quezon had recently said it would take 'fifty years to bring the American people around' to understanding a dominion arrangement, but he secretly agreed to a reconsideration of the problem if McNutt took the initiative." Early in 1938, McNutt was in Washington and right from the heart of Columbia he broadcast an appeal for a "reexamination" of the Philippine course. "The Philippines will become a bloody ground," said he, "if the flag of the United States goes down." He got approving cables from American businessmen in Manila, and also from Quezon, who moreover told the press that McNutt's facts were "unassailable." When certain Nacionalistas attacked the McNutt proposal they were called down by a furious Quezon, to whom they had to explain that "they were actually in favor of postponing independence, but, with Assembly elections coming up, to say so might endanger Nacionalista candidates." Quezon saw the point and sent McNutt a second cable in which he protested that "at no time did I presume that what I might agree upon and advocate would be adopted by my people." He need not have worried, if by "my people" he meant the class to which he belonged. When he said, "If I could have both prosperity and freedom without completely breaking our political ties with America, I would have been a fool had I been opposed to them," he was very clearly expressing

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8Tribune, September 27, 1939.
10Tribune, September 27, 1939.
11Pacis, p. 115.
12The Good Fight, p. 142.
the muddled thinking of the average educated Filipino of the time, who saw no disparity between “freedom” and “ties with America.”

It’s a thinking now like freak to us, for whom the Philippine statehood movement is pure lunatic fringe; but in prewar days the equivalent movement was not oddball but serious, backed by the classes that had prestige, influence, learning, money and power. As Europe darkened, the clamor in the Philippines for “reexamination” grew louder. As usual the angriest voice to be raised against it was Benigno Aquino’s, proclaiming him, again, a traitor to his class. Two weeks after the Nazis entered Poland, he delivered a philippic that sparked the debate still in progress when the Japanese entered Manila. “On September 14, 1939, appearing before Manila Rotarians at their usual weekly luncheon, he gave his well-fed audience the goose-flesh when he affirmed the nationalist ideal.”

The speech was in answer to “the movement launched recently for the indefinite continuation” of the Philippine-American relationship.

Aquino denounced the promoters of such movements as “defeatists” who had forgotten how, during the Revolution, Filipinos defended their liberty with their blood: “I feel horrified by the thought that today there should be descendants of that generation who are ready to repudiate the liberty promised us.” Independence alone was the solution to the national problem, not a permanent commonwealth, nor dominion status, nor statehood within the American union. “Vassalage will not stand the test,” cried he. “Our people, standing at the crossroads of a new life, must make a thorough revision of our artificial and borrowed way of life, which engenders nothing but indolence, begets wastrels, and develops weaklings who shudder at the mere thought of facing a stiff struggle for existence.” For a nation in permanent vassalage could never develop its own self; a country dependent on another people’s benevolence could never hope to enjoy a personality of its own. Colonialism was racial slavery. If Filipinos would be freed from the influence of “powerful nations interested in protecting and developing their own commercial interests,” then Filipinos must be willing to work out their own destiny. “If through misfortune they should fail, at least they would have written their glorious existence in history in letters of gold.” Half-measures in place of full independence were untenable; “Statehood for the Philippines is out of the question and a dominion status is similarly undesirable. It would be illusory to think that with a dominion status the Philippines could enjoy complete autonomy. . . . Even the so-called advantage of American protection is illusory.” And illusory as well were the benefits enjoyed by the Filipinos in the American market. Those who wanted free trade and freedom were confusing the issue by “demanding impossible conditions in order to frustrate the realization of our main national objective.”

“There remains for us,” said Aquino, “no other road to follow save the road of honor, which leads to the absolute and complete independence of our country. What a degrading spectacle we would offer to the world if, after centuries of patriotic struggle, now that liberty is being granted to us unconditionally, we should seek the continuation of our dependence!”

As can be seen, the nationalist position that seemed so novel in the 1930s (Recto & company) and that had become second nature by the 1970s (the activist protest) had already been laid down in 1939 by Benigno Aquino, who is seldom cited as a father of Philippine nationalism. Yet he spoke at a time when it, the nationalist line, was not fashionable and therefore not so easy to stick to. He had, in fact, to speak as the deputy of his father’s generation rather than of his own, because the “defeatists” of the Revolution were ready to “repudiate” what it stood for. But unknowingly he was also speaking as the deputy of the tougher generations that would spring up after the war.

His works were to earn him the scorn of the “defeatists.”

Ten days later, Assemblyman Jose E. Romero, of the sugar island of Negros, rose on the floor of the National Assembly to refute the “recent nationalist utterings” of Secretary Aquino. He had never, said Romero, expected the secretary to say the things he said. How could Aquino picture Filipinos as an “enslaved people”? Filipinos enjoyed freedom of speech, of the press, of religion, of assembly, of petition, etc. “We are free in all but form,” said Romero. Then he proceeded to paint “a dark picture of an independent Philippines in 1946,” with trade preferences gone; the sugar, coco oil, tobacco and copra industries wiped out; and hundreds of thousands of Filipinos thrown out of work. Aquino had said that a colonial status meant racial slavery; and the rejection of independence, a loss of face — but, said Romero: “We can lose not only face but body and soul . . . by another foreign conquest; but no nation in the world will despise us for pausing to reexamine our national problem in this era of international anarchy and in the face of the danger of economic chaos.”

Commented the Tribune:

“One anticipated effect of the Romero speech is the formation of factions within the Nacionalista Party on the issue of independence vs. postponement.”

Aquino’s comment on the rebuttal was an allusion to Sancho Panza, who was taken on a crusade but was more concerned with his stomach. This, of course, prompted Romero to protest that he was as concerned

14 Mangahas, Frontline Man.

15 Tribune, September 15, 1939.
16 Tribune, September 26, 1939.
17 Friend, p. 197.
with ideals as anyone else; however: "I am Sancho Panza to the extent that I think even the highest ideals must thrive on a live body, and that the body has to live before it can harbor ideals." By implication, Secretary Aquino had made himself out to be a Don Quijote — an idea, said Romero, with which he was willing to agree: "I would not be the one to disturb the secretary in the pleasant pastime of tilting at windmills."18

The "national aspiration" must indeed have fallen on evil days if its champions could be dismissed as Quijotes and their insistence on independence as a tilting at windmills. But Romero had hit at a truer picture than he thought. Aquino was indeed tilting at mills: the sugar mills that were no imaginary giants blocking the road to freedom. Said the Tribune: "Many wealthy sugar men from Negros and Iloilo are reported in favor of the stand of Romero, who had urged the indefinite postponement of independence... it was learned yesterday in sugar circles. A number of prominent Negros and Iloilo residents are behind the movement for an indefinite Commonwealth, as advocated by Salvador Araneta. It was reported that many Negros sugar men will be heard from in the event that the question of postponing independence becomes a vital political issue."19

The question did become a political issue, chiefly because Quezon "wanted to explore the idea of postponement...without involving his own reputation." His "legislative lieutenants" did the job of provoking a vote on the issue by the National Assembly and of mobilizing public opinion. "Labor leaders, except the Communists, were open to persuasion or already active in the retention cause, mainly out of fear of falling into alien hands. A poll of middle-class and professional elements showed three-fifths in favor of continuing commonwealth status indefinitely."20

Against these cabals of fear, which warned of a liberty dressed in rags, Aquino wryly quoted a Quezon dictum: "Poverty with honor is preferable to wealth with dishonesty." Happily, the "legislative lieutenants" made the tactical error of forcing a premature vote on the issue and lost in the balloting. "After a stormy two-hour debate the National Assembly last night [September 29, 1939] approved a resolution reaffirming its stand in favor of the independence program...as the Assembly's answer to the reexamination plan launched by Romero."21 The vote was 53-7. This, however, did not end the debate; the vote in the Assembly could be read as only expressing the solons' fear of scuttling their chances in the next elections. The timing had been wrong. So, the retentionists organized the Philippine Civic League to ripen up the permanent-colony idea, while grandees like Salvador Araneta and Vicente Lópeche understood that country be spared the "cross of an untimely independence."

The debate was carried over into 1940, with Aquino still warring on those who wanted more of colonialism. In one diatribe he compared them to the character in Rizal who thought he could endure not being free if allowed a minimum of comfort. Said Aquino: "A permanent Commonwealth, for instance, in exchange for independence — is it not perhaps a little piece of rag...so the chain will rattle less and does not gangrene the skin? Economic advantages with which they hallucinate the people...are they not perhaps the 'little house, the wife and the handful of rice' with which poor unhappy Basilio appeared to be content?" A newspaper columnist would later (during the war) comment that "in prosperity or in trouble, Mr. Aquino's is a one-track mind regarding national self-respect and independence."22 But the fact that, halfway through the Commonwealth, "Quijotes" like Benigno Aquino were still trying to convince their countrymen that liberty even in rags was to be preferred, had the alarming implication that Filipinos were not really a freedom-loving people but a fickle race that could sigh for the fleshpots of Egypt even before those fleshpots had been left behind.

With the "main national objective" again in question, Aquino could hardly be expected to stay with the grass and the cattle; and in 1941 he resigned from the cabinet and the agricultural department to return to active politics.23 He ran for the restored Legislature (two houses again) and for the sixth time in his life won the seat he ran for. He was Representante Aquino again, headed back for the House, and already tagged as "the future Speaker," for the reelected President Quezon was, in this particular detail, apparently willing to abide by a previous scenario. Aquino's star was still in the ascendant. "No man in Philippine public life has had more personal tiffs with the Administration, yet he is one of the very few who have merited both the affection and respect of El Presidente."24 History, however, intervened before Aquino could wield the Speaker's gavel.

On December 8 came the news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Faith in Mother America assumed that the war would be venial, a matter of weeks: the Japs would never know, what hit them and MacArthur would dine at the Manila Hotel on New Year's Day. What New Year's Day, 1942, brought was Homma's hordes, panting towards the gates of

18Tribune, September 27, 1939.
19Tribune, September 27, 1939.
20Friend, p. 192.
21Tribune, September 30, 1939.
22Mangahas, Frontline Man.
23He was outstanding achievement as department Secretary have been the preservation of an undreamed-of degree of the nation's natural resources, the setting up of machinery for the protection of homestead patents, the expedient and inexpensive disposal of applications for homestead patents, the establishment of an effective system of preventative promotion of Philippine overseas trade, the establishment of an effective system of preventative promotion of Philippine overseas trade, and the expansion of facilities for the speedy disposal of farm products, "— Graphic, November 6, 1941.
24Ibid.
Manila. At nightfall of the following day the fetid soldiery entered and occupied a city which could not, in its shock, understand that it had fallen. Aquino had been proved right in saying that even the so-called advantage of American protection was "illusory."

On January 5, eve of the Epiphany, he joined Yulo, Paredes, Vargas, Laurel and Sison at No. 353 Peñafrancia to discuss the situation. That year the Three Kings brought not goodies but a rod, and a people that had wished for more colonialism got its wish.

**NO. 353 PEÑAFRANCIA** in Manila's Paco district was the Yulo residence; and within its high-walled compound the political oligarchy met daily from January 5 to 12, 1942, usually in the afternoon, the number of conferees increasing from the original six to three dozen, representing all branches of government. In the Peñafrancia conferences was a preview of how the oligarchs would weather the war, from the initial "emphatic, reiterated and vehement protestations of loyalty and adherence to the President of the Commonwealth" (then a refugee on Corregidor) to the later quietness of some, ambiguity of others, and outright switch of the rest. None of the positions arrived at was an instant reaction; each was a process: Yulo, for instance, began with a show of initiative but in time became diffident; and what meter can calibrate the graduation of Vargas from neutral courier to involved protagonist? But perhaps the development of most interest was Benigno Aquino's, because it implied our past and presaged the future.

Basing the statement on an interview with Colonel Ota Kaneshiro in 1958, or 13 years after the war, Theodore Friend has it that, as early as January 6 or 7, 1942, Aquino had met with the Japanese and proposed himself for president, presumably of a Japanese-sponsored republic. This is highly doubtful. Aquino had no reputation as pro-Japanese before the war, but rather the contrary, and would therefore not have dared to offer himself as instant puppet. Moreover, at the Peñafrancia conferences he showed no awareness that the Japanese were planning to sponsor Philippine independence; he it was who fought to get the word independence into the reply of the Peñafrancia group to the Japanese command.

"Almost immediately, Maeda and his advisers insisted that the reply should not contain the words freedom and independence. The Japanese

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1 *Between Two Empires*, p. 215.