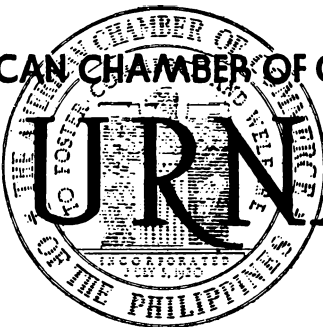


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Editorials

A sense of the dark, abrupt ways of fate, which change the existences of nations, as of individuals, was again impressed on us with the sudden death* of President Roxas, — a wholly unanticipated blow.

Manuel Roxas One of the reasons why many Filipinos at the last presidential elections voted for Mr. Roxas rather than Mr. Osmeña, was that the former was so much younger and more vigorous a man. Thus they thought to guard the country against the possible death-in-office of the national leader; but, elected President, it was Roxas who died, Roxas who was cut off at the height of his usefulness.

The demise of a chief executive is a serious loss to any nation at any time; all the more so in the Philippines today, where so much depends on the continuity of wise initial governmental policies and the vigor with which they are carried forward.

Not that all would agree that the Government's policies are wise in every respect, but it was generally felt that Roxas understood at least the risks and would move with due consideration of them. In so far as, for the Philippines, the all-important relationship with the United States of America is concerned, he was deeply convinced of the value of the ties that still bind the two countries. And though himself a nationalist, he had the world outlook, and he did what he could to temper the hypernationalism of some of his colleagues.

He was most unfortunate in his dealings with the Hukbalahap, which turned from a valiant war-time guerrilla force into an insurrectory organization and which, resorting to violence in its opposition to the Government, could only be dealt with by violence. The situation thus created approached civil war in some areas for a time, and still has not cleared.

Having himself divided the post-war remnants of the Nacionalista Party in running against Mr. Osmeña, he had to cope with, and was often seriously hindered by, factional disunion and lack of party discipline. He had, too, to combat the deterioration in public morality resulting from the years of enemy-occupation, and improbity in office, bribery, corruption, continued rife.

While the President's sudden death shocked the country, saddened many, and filled others with unease as to the future, and while there was a spate of eulogy, much of it wholly sincere, it is not to be denied that many of Roxas' followers, who looked upon him at the time of his assumption of office as the "Redeemer", had been deeply disillusioned long before the time of his death.

But the simple truth is that the electorate in general expected too much of a mortal man, — just as earlier, during the first post-war confusion, it had expected too much of President Osmeña. No head of a government is all-powerful or can work miracles. And the responsibility for things as they are can never be laid on one man, even the national leader, but must be borne by every citizen.

Whatever may be said in praise or detraction, and in final evaluation, it remains lamentably true that the Philippines, in the death of Roxas, lost the most outstanding figure of his generation, — a magnetic, courageous, gifted, and able man, experienced in politics and the work of administration; such a man as the country has all too few of.

His actual accomplishments as the first President of the Republic, during a period of office covering something less than two years, are very great, and include the organization of the government machinery called for by the independent status of the country, the conclusion of a number of vitally important treaties and agreements with the United States, treaties with other foreign countries, and the charting of a general administrative plan and program for the coming years. Of great importance, too, was his constant and eloquent stressing of the ideals of freedom and democracy.

Most touching to Americans was the fact that he spent the last day of his life, — withal a happy one, at Clark Field, Pampanga, and made his last speech there to the officers and men of the 13th U. S. Airforce, testifying, to use his own words, "not only to the friendship — the enduring friendship — that exists between Americans and Filipinos, but to the indestructible faith that Filipinos and Americans have in each other".

May that faith never be destroyed and may Manuel Roxas live in Philippine history.

*Thursday night, April 15, of coronary thrombosis.