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## The Elections 1961

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# The Elections 1961

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MAXIMO V. SOLIVEN

**T**HE Year of Our Lord 1961 has been a rather bad year for sooth-sayers, poll experts and political swamis in general. There are, no doubt, a number of slightly used and badly clouded crystal balls for sale this season.

One prognosticator who did not miss the boat, however, was one Dr. Gemiliano C. Lopez, Sr., who, in the tradition of his father — the late Honorio Lopez — saw the victory of the United Opposition written in the stars. For years, the "*Dimasalang Kalendaryong Tagalog ni Honorio Lopez*" (literally: "The Never-Mistaken Tagalog Calendar") has been the fearless forecaster of events to come for the *bakya* crowd. Was it not, its faithful adherents argue, this same Almanac which foretold the violent death of the late President Ramon Magsaysay? It was therefore hardly surprising that when the Calendar's 1961 edition went on the newsstands for 25 centavos in January last year, it was so enthusiastically seized upon by the masses that copies subsequently went on the "blackmarket" at one peso each.

This year, the stars did not disappoint the seer. Stargazer Lopez warmed to his subject by venturing the comparatively safe predictions that "Graft and corruption will not disappear"; "We will again experience cheating in procurement and stealing in the government"; and "There will be treachery in Parties and both Parties will go overboard in abuses during election time, therefore the flow of blood cannot be avoided". Then Lopez declared that "the

Sign of Saturn under the Ram and the setting down of the Sun under the Sign of Aries both indicate the death of our leading citizen (*'pangunahin nating mamamayan'*)"—which his devotees now note referred to the passing away last October of the late President Sergio Osmeña Sr. The final triumphant prediction was that "the government will pit itself against a strong Opposition and the November elections will see a big change in the Administration."

The "big change" has come, and the followers of the Tagalog horoscope have (at least in their own minds) been vindicated. Less fortunate practitioners of the art of gazing into the future, however, were those "experts" of the National Resettlement and Rehabilitation Administration (NARRA), the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA), the Presidential Assistance for Community Development (PACD), and the Nacionalista Party who discovered to their sorrow on November 14 that wishful thinking seldom makes wishes come true.

Using more scientific methods than either Dr. Lopez or the government, two poll samplings came closer to the specific truth than both. One was the Princeton survey of August and September which was subjected to loud verbal abuse by outraged Nacionalistas but was vindicated in the end. The Princeton report indicated that 54 per cent of the Filipino voters polled expressed a preference for Diosdado Macapagal, 46 per cent were for Carlos P. Garcia, and some 20 per cent were still at that time "undecided". A local survey group associated with America's famed Gallup Poll, Robot Statistics, also demonstrated the efficacy of modern public-opinion-sampling techniques by reporting in September that Macapagal would win by 600,000 votes. Robot took over 3,500 samples to plot voting trends among the nation's 7,800,000 registered voters and proved that scientific technique, while slower to reach conclusions, was decidedly more accurate than astrology.

The most consistent and probably the most accurate forecaster of all was Macapagal himself who predicted his own victory as early as 1958 and never wavered from this

conviction. In the months before election day last year, he went even further. He publicly announced that he expected to win by 1,000,000 votes, while privately admitting that he would clear an approximate margin of 700,000. When the Congress of the Philippines proclaimed him President-elect on December 13, he had received 3,554,840 ballots as against President Garcia's tally of 2,902,966. By official count, he had won by 651,874 votes.

In a more poetic than superstitious sense, Macapagal has always held that his destiny was written in the stars. Four years ago, he candidly pointed out to this writer that it had taken Garcia 30 years in politics to become Vice-President, while it had taken him only eight. On that day, he cheerfully noted that he had formed a "Shadow Cabinet" in his vice-presidential office in Malacañang. "My 'Fiscalization Cabinet' meets in the East Wing, where the sun rises," he optimistically declared. "President Garcia's Nacionalista Cabinet meets in the West Wing, where the sun sets." Macapagal and his fellow Liberals, however, left matters neither to destiny nor to chance in the drive to make sure that the sun would set on the Garcia Administration. Macapagal himself threw all his energies into the task of unseating Garcia. But it seemed, as he plotted and made his moves, that some Providence guided his actions and retrieved his mistakes.

The rise of Macapagal parallels the tortuous road that the Liberal Party had to travel in its painful return from almost total defeat and disgrace in 1953 at the hands of the late Ramon Magsaysay and a resurgent Nacionalista Party. The reasons for that debacle of 1953 belong to another story. But then, as in 1961, the crying need for a change and the smoldering indignation of the people against the political terrorism, rank dishonesty and ill-concealed graft of the Quirino-Avelino era built an explosive situation in search of a spark. The NPs found their "spark" in the person of Magsaysay, whom they "imported" from the Liberal Party to lead the crusade. With Magsaysay came the young idealists and amateur politicians of the

Citizens Party who had been waiting since 1949 for such an opportunity for action: Raul S. Manglapus, Francisco "Soc" Rodrigo, Manuel Manahan, etc.

Because many of the outward phenomena of 1953 and of 1961 are so similar, there is a danger that the significant difference between the two campaigns will be overlooked. In the 1953 campaign, as the crusaders marched forward to storm the bastions of the LP administration to the stirring music of the "Magsaysay March" and the "Mambo Magsaysay", there was a holiday spirit, almost a festive air to the conflict. From the outset, there was little doubt that victory would be won and the landslide of more than a million votes confirmed this optimism. In 1961, despite the euphemistic and tinny strains of "Happy Days are Here Again", the United Opposition was compelled to fight a deliberate, nerve-wracking battle. Even as the ballots began to be counted, registering as early Liberal lead, the nagging doubts and fears persisted that by some last-minute manipulation a deluge of Nacionalista votes from the south would wipe away the LP advantage. Only Macapagal, it seems, remained unperturbed and confident in the suspenseful hours that preceded the certainty of triumph.

This is why anyone who seeks to evaluate the diverse factors which led to the final turning of the tide last November must trace the role of Macapagal in the political drama. For paradoxically, in the very hour that RM was swept into Malacañang on the shoulders of a cheering populace, the "poor boy" from Lubao had just begun his climb to the leadership of a discredited Liberal Party. Few realized at this critical juncture that the young Congressman from Pampanga, who had won a second term amid an almost universal rout, would eight years later be the standard-bearer of the LP.

This was demonstrated during a meeting held by ranking Liberals in that bleak December of Defeat, when even the dark clouds offered no hint of a silver lining. The caucus, called amidst an atmosphere of gloom to assess the disastrous events which had practically obliterated the LP

as a political force, took place at the Peñafrancia (Paco) residence of former Speaker Jose Yulo. Present at the doleful session were defeated President Elpidio Quirino, the late Speaker ("Manong") Eugenio Perez, Yulo himself, and sundry other members of the LP Old Guard who had staggered from the polls in much the same condition as Napoleon's last wave at Waterloo.

Looking around at the tired, aging faces which surrounded him, former Manila Congressman Hermenegildo Atienza remarked in some surprise:

"Where are Macapagal, Marcos and Villareal?"

He felt that the Pampangueño reelectionist and his two reelected colleagues in the Lower House, Ferdinand Marcos and Cornelio Villareal, should have been included in the meeting.

"Never mind them," one of the older LP stalwarts, now a Nacionalista ex-senator, asserted. "They are young fellows and their opinions don't count."

This statement was accepted and the session went on to half-heartedly recall that the Republican Party in the United States had returned to power only the previous year (1952) after a long wait of 20 years. This, it was hopefully suggested, might be duplicated by the Liberals if they only got to work immediately.

It was the "young fellows" whose opinions didn't count who accomplished the task in eight years.

How was this done?

There have by now appeared a multitude of *post mortems* on the subject, some of them calling to mind that Spanish moralism of Compoamor that "in this treacherous world, nothing is true or false—it all depends on the color of the glasses through which one is looking." Without subscribing to the gentle cynicism of the epigram, let us attempt to unravel this long and confusing puzzle by dividing the problem into four main compartments, the details

of which may overlap but nonetheless appear to fall into place in the end.

These are:

- (1) Graft and Corruption—The Evolution of an Issue;
- (2) Disunity Among the Nacionalistas;
- (3) The Birth of a United Opposition; and
- (4) The Campaign: A Coming of Age for the Filipino.

#### GRAFT & CORRUPTION: THE EVOLUTION OF AN ISSUE

One of the perennial issues in election campaigns is that of "graft and corruption". It has become part and parcel of our campaign oratory. The Tambobong-Buenavista deal, the surplus property scandals, the import control anomalies, and numerous other instances of venality became the names of shame that highlighted the graft and corruption of the old LP administration. Magsaysay had other, more dramatic symbols for his reform campaign—such as the portrait of him holding the lifeless body of Moises Padilla in his arms, a symbol of bleeding democracy impaled on the cross of LP political terrorism. And yet the basic issue remained "Graft and corruption".

Magsaysay sought to root out the cancer after he assumed office in 1954. For months it seemed as though he were succeeding, but in time it became apparent, even to a harassed and overworked Magsaysay himself, that the "cancer" had merely gone underground. As long as The Guy remained in Malacañang, sensitive to the moral corrosion, impetuously ready (as happened on many an occasion) to react to reports of venality with immediate, if sometimes impulsive, action, the rot could be partially contained. On March 17, 1957, the presidential plane crashed into a mountain in Cebu—and RM died.

The tragedy catapulted into power an almost unknown "cipher"—his vice-president, Carlos P. Garcia, who had to fly back from Canberra, Australia, to take over the reins of office. So overwhelming had been Magsaysay's personality that Garcia had moved almost unnoticed in his shadow. Now the nation was compelled to take notice of him. Filipinos found

him a rather nondescript chess-playing poet and lawyer from Talibon, a quiet fishing community on the northern coast of Bohol. Garcia's main claim to fame at that time was that he had been undefeated in the 30 years since he had first run for representative in the third district of Bohol. He had been governor of Bohol (nine years) and two-term senator when he was tapped as Magsaysay's running mate on a ticket that could not lose.

Thus, the legend of Mr. Garcia's "luck" began. Eight months after he moved into Malacañang, the man from Talibon showed that, apart from luck, he possessed a shrewd instinct for backroom maneuvering which enabled him to parlay his caretaker status into reelection. Although he cornered only 42 percent of the vote, he ran in a field of four candidates: former Speaker Yulo stood for the Liberals, former Customs Commissioner and Magsaysay "Graft Buster" Manahan represented a hastily assembled Progressive Party of the Philippines, and the late Senator Claro M. Recto, who placed fourth, ran as standard-bearer of the minuscule Nationalist-Citizens Party.

An early press conference, conducted shortly after his reelection, seemed to set the tone for what was to come. Questioned as to the propriety of the Central Bank having allocated a large dollar quota to a firm owned by one of his Cabinet members, Garcia blandly replied with a question which has become classic. Is it wrong, he wanted to know, for a man to provide for his future? In the past election campaign, the Opposition successfully drummed into the minds of the electorate that during the four years and eight months of the Garcia regime, many Nacionalistas had indeed "provided for their future".

They had some help from Nacionalistas themselves. In late 1958, "Mr. Nacionalista" himself, Senate (and NP) President Eulogio Rodriguez Sr. started brandishing his now famous White Paper, which he followed up with two additional White Papers on an almost annual basis. The "Amang" charged Garcia with permitting influence peddling and graft and demanded "reforms". The charges were never officially

bared, but enough details were allowed to leak out to the public to create a climate of malicious speculation. More serious-minded fellow NPs twisted the knife in the wound. Manila Congressman Joaquin Roces, the conscientious chairman of the House Good Government committee, released a damaging omnibus report that between 1957 and 1960 some ₱2 billion had been lost through graft in government corporations and in the Central Bank. The wastage in public funds during the period, owing to inefficiency and wanton spending, the committee report stated, amounted to ₱458 million, much of it in the bureau of customs and the bureau of internal revenue. The crowning blow was struck by Manila's acid-tongued Mayor Arsenio H. Lacson, himself a member of the NP directorate, when he defected to the Opposition last June. Although he did not affiliate himself with the Liberals, Lacson accepted the position of presidential campaign manager for Macapagal. In typical Lacsonian rhetoric, Manila's political maverick asserted that "President Garcia's self-seeking, erratic, and predatory leadership, aggravated by his mismanagement of the national purpose, has exposed the nation to dire peril." "We cannot have another term of President Garcia and his satellites and cronies," Lacson cried, "without running the risk of graft and corruption becoming our way of life."

While these sentiments actually appear polite and restrained when set beside the more colorful of His Honor the Mayor's verbal salvos, they underlined the issue to which the Liberals and the United Opposition were to cling with such tenacity throughout the campaign. They hammered at it from all angles. When Nacionalistas tried to counter by pointing out the evils of the past Liberal administration, the LPs retorted that corruption had become an "organized science" under the Garcia regime. "And where are the LP crooks of the Quirino administration?" the Opposition queried. "They are now in the Nacionalista Party!"

An administration in power is naturally on the defensive. The NPs were forced to cite unconvincing statistics. They

pointed out that President Garcia was implementing the Anti-Graft drive through his special committees. Close to 10,000 convictions had been secured out of 29,000 administrative cases filed against government officials and employees, they maintained. As many as 996 criminal cases had been filed against erring government personnel. But the Liberals had an answer for that, too. "Those are the small fry!" they said. "What about the big fish? What about the Cabinet member who failed to file his income tax? What about the NP senator charged with malversing huge sums? What about the influence peddlers and the privileged dollar quota holders in Congress and among those close to Malacañang?"

The NPs lost the first skirmish when they sought to side-step the corruption issue. Raising the dramatic battle-cry of "Filipino First", they declared that the real issue was "nationalism". Hinting vaguely at the tyranny of "alien interests" (which they failed to identify) pro-Nacionalista propagandists accused Macapagal of "anti-Filipinism" and "subservience to alien groups". The implication was there, but the foreign interests were never categorically identified as American. From a practical standpoint, NPs were not sure an anti-U.S. platform would garner rather than lose votes.

This line of approach played right into the hands of the Opposition. LPs asserted that when the Nacionalistas said "Filipino First" they meant "*some* Filipinos first"—namely themselves. We suspect the Opposition even spread the rumor that the U.S. government preferred to see Macapagal win and had actually "contributed" money to the Opposition campaign kitty. By sheer coincidence, Brig. Gen. Ed Lansdale, the Pentagon "mystery man" who had long been reputed to have helped in the planning of Magsaysay's anti-Communist strategy, visited Manila for a few hours enroute back to the U.S. from South Vietnam. He was forthwith "accused" of being a special courier who delivered American funds to Macapagal. As one Manila newspaper quipped: "The Opposition expects to win by a Lansdale".

The most compelling Opposition argument, of course, was that those NPs who cheated, stole or "provided for their

future" could hardly be termed true "nationalists". This deftly brought attention back to the question of corruption. And to make it mean more than a high-sounding word to the grassroots listener, the LPs successfully linked official venality to the economic hardships which beset the country: shortages in food, spiralling prices and unemployment.

Events appear to have militated in the Liberals' favor. Despite earlier government claims of bumper rice production, it became apparent by June that a serious rice shortage was in prospect. Whether a shortage actually existed or was the result of manipulation by the rice merchants who had cornered the market or was due to both factors combined, the rice crisis became the proverbial last straw.

In alarm, the government programmed the immediate importation of \$24-million worth of rice from neighboring countries in Southeast Asia as well as a quantity of Spanish rice. The emergency procurement proved not only inadequate, but the channels of distribution were faulty. As the rice queues lengthened and consumers found themselves paying from P1.40 to P2.00 per ganta, the grumbling began. It reached a crescendo in September at the height of the campaign. In a typical instance, former President Garcia's Bicol stump took his motorcade past the marketplace of one town in Albay. This was a tactical error. The townspeople, lining up to buy "expensive" rice, heartily booed the presidential entourage.

The Opposition added fuel to the flame by harping on the connection between corruption and the soaring cost of living. Daily, Macapagal's recorded voice went on the air throughout the country enjoining the electorate to "stop corruption and rising prices" by voting the United Opposition into office. In a nation where annual per capita income is still no more than P381.00, the message found ready listeners.

Abetting the climate of general discontent was the fact that the economy was in and remains in the doldrums. Despite the country's rich and largely untapped resources, foreign investment had been slow to come into the Philippines. Foreign capital seemed wary of the implications of the Garcia

regime's policy of "Filipino First". They saw no guarantees that their original investment and a proportion of their profits would be remitted in foreign exchange by the Central Bank. Even German economist Hjalmar Schacht, who came to study the country's monetary and economic policies in 1959, reported that CB was granting import and export allocations on an arbitrary basis. The climate of uncertainty was aggravated by expectations that the currency was on its way to "devaluation" under the euphemism of "decontrol". The Philippine peso was already worth only 27 centavos of the pre-war peso. The international reserve had plummeted from \$355,910,000 in 1950 to about \$117,000,000 (with close to \$50 million of that already committed) on the eve of election day. The slump in the economy was further accelerated by a deterioration in the world prices of some of the P.I.'s major export products: copra, coconut oil and coconut products, logs and lumber. The labor force was, naturally, the first sector to be affected. Official unemployment and underemployment estimates admitted to at least 800,000. The Liberals claimed the actual number of unemployed and underemployed ran into millions.

The Nacionalistas were hard-pressed to answer criticism of their solutions to the country's economic problems. To be fair, some of the adverse developments had been beyond their control. Their greatest disadvantage, however, was that they had been in "power" for two terms or an equivalent of eight years and things had gotten worse instead of getting better.

Why? The Liberals had a facile answer: Incompetence and neglect, the "logical concomitants of graft and corruption". Thus Macapagal and his party managed to successfully project themselves in the public eye as the Party of Hope.

Macapagal pledged to uproot the causes of corruption and graft: (1) Abolish the "pork barrel" and the system of political patronage; (2) decentralize government, giving autonomy and control over taxation, finances and local undertakings to local governments; (3) implement "command res-

possibility"—making the president responsible for the conduct of his subordinates, and each department secretary and official all the way down the line responsible for those under their supervision; (4) restore integrity to the civil service; and (5) provide opportunities for education and technical training for all.

He also promised to attain self-sufficiency in the production of rice, corn and staple foods; provide opportunities for the employment of all willing to work; set an example of honesty and "simple living".

"It's time for a change!" the United Opposition cried. And the people listened.

#### DISUNITY AMONG THE NACIONALISTAS

In contrast to the United Opposition was the disunited Nacionalista Party.

The first to rebel against what they termed the progressive immorality of the Garcia administration were the idealists who saw the aims of the Magsaysay "crusade" first neglected and then, as they put it, betrayed. Thus began a wave of defections: by Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Manglapus and Labor Secretary Adevosos (both of whom had been catapulted to prominence by their role in the Magsaysay-for-President Movement but had never joined the NP), Senator Francisco "Soc" Rodrigo and Senator Emmanuel Pelaez (who were NPs) and others who felt as they did. The last such defection was that of Mayor Lacson on June 13. Lacson may have nursed his own private presidential ambitions, but he ultimately saw that the only way to throw Garcia "and the other rascals" out was to throw his support behind Macapagal.

The second note of discord was struck by the Nacionalista Party president himself, Senate President Eulogio Rodriguez Sr. The "Amang" may have been motivated by latter-day idealism, but the more obvious and proximate cause of his disenchantment with Garcia seemed to be the realization that influence in the NP was slipping away from him.

At any rate, Rodriguez charged that financial shenanigans being countenanced by Malacañang were destroying the party's prestige and would result in the NP's repudiation at the polls. Although "Amang" never carried out his threats to run for the presidency as a separate NP candidate, split the party, make public his White Papers, or campaign against Garcia, he managed to achieve the very thing he protested he was trying to avoid. His veiled insinuations were more damaging to the NP than the bandied accusations of a dozen Liberals. And even after his "surrender" at a kiss-and-make-up session with Garcia a few months before the elections, Rodriguez seems to have waged a "guerrilla war" within the party. "Amang" claims that it was only loyalty to those who had supported him in the party's intramurals which prompted him to encourage the establishment of 24 "Free Zones" in the congressional fight. Whatever the motive, the "Free Zones" pitted Nacionalistas against each other, weakening the party's battle strength at the precinct level.

The final schisms were engendered by a Constitutional quirk which promised any ambitious vice-presidential hopeful the opportunity to become president of the Philippines via the back door. This was ambiguously worded Section 5, Article VII, of the Constitution which stipulates that "no person shall serve as President for more than eight consecutive years. The period of service shall be counted from the date he shall have commenced to act as President."

The fact that President Garcia, if reelected, would "automatically" have been compelled to step down after three years and three months, thus enabling his vice-president to assume the presidency, was seen as a boost to his candidacy. Garcia's advisers and strategists cynically observed that even the Liberal Party's vice-presidential bet, or at least his sympathizers, would support CPG with an eye to attaining the presidency in early 1965.

This possibility, indeed, encouraged former Rep. Sergio Osmeña Jr. to run for vice-president as an Independent. By the same token, it adversely affected the chances of the NP official candidate.

Much has been already said and written about the Nacionalista Party convention of June 3 which was significantly held in a Coliseum (Araneta) and has been compared to the "bread and circus" spectacles of ancient Rome. The bread was supplied by five caterers and the circus was provided by 12 Nacionalista stalwarts and their partisans who struggled for the vice-presidential nomination using weapons undreamed of in the annals of gladiatorial combat. The contest was fierce, for the prospective candidates knew that they were vying not for the vice-presidency alone but ultimately for the presidency itself. It was here that Garcia committed his first serious tactical blunder.

Had he signified his personal choice at a much earlier stage, most of the bitter infighting and rivalry, which was climaxed by a riotous Convention, could have been avoided. Instead, Mr. Garcia decided to play coy. As a result, more NPs entered the fray than had been bargained for. By the eve of the convention, almost all of the contenders had spent too much, invested too much time and effort, and made too many promises to their followers, to withdraw.

It was inevitable that, when the 1,418 delegates trooped into Manila for the balloting, the convention degenerated into a Bacchanalian orgy of wild spending. As *Time* magazine quoted Mayor Lacson as saying, the delegates were "wined, dined and womaned" — the mayor jestingly threatened to sue the magazine for having quoted him "ungrammatically" on the last word.

In the end, the competition narrowed down to three men: Former Finance Secretary Dominador R. Aytona, Senator Quintin Paredes, and Senator Gil J. Puyat. After two ballotings, punctuated by angry speeches and denunciations, President Garcia strode into the Coliseum to proclaim Puyat the winner.

But the damage had been done. In the frenzy whipped up by the "civil war" within the party, ranking Nacionalistas made statements for which they were to repent at leisure. Among them were the so-called "Have-Not" group, composed of Senators Cipriano Primicias, Arturo Tolentino, Lorenzo

Sumulong and former Defense Secretary Alejo Santos. They indignantly charged that "vote buying" was rampant and that unethical practices were being employed to woo support by some of their rivals.

Such remarks were faithfully reported to the nation by the press, radio and television. The unsavory reputation of the NP convention and the bitterness stirred up among the adherents of the various candidates for the vice-presidential nomination were to plague the party up to election day.

Puyat's followers now realize that he may have won only a pyrrhic victory at the Araneta Coliseum. On November 14, some of the heaviest setbacks he suffered were in the bailiwicks of a number of his convention rivals. Worse, he was abandoned by many Garcia partisans who greedily attempted to assure their candidate's reelection by exploiting the popularity of the two other vice-presidential contenders. During the campaign, Puyat discovered to his dismay that in areas where LP-bet Maning Pelaez was strong, a Garcia-Pelaez ticket was being boosted. In the eastern Visayas and portions of Mindanao where Serging Osmeña was reputed to be influential, a Garcia-Osmeña tandem was being proposed.

The story may be apocryphal, but there is a post-election anecdote about Senator Puyat who met with a few lieutenants to assess the election debacle. His defeat, Puyat was quoted as concluding, had demonstrated "that an independent candidate cannot hope to win".

"But, Senator," one of his followers reminded him, "you were not an Independent—you were the official candidate of the Nacionalista Party."

To which Puyat replied with gentle sarcasm: "Was I?"

#### THE BIRTH OF A UNITED OPPOSITION

If one were to seize upon a particular date and say: "This was the turning point of the political battle" — the choice would be December 30, 1960, practically a year to the day Messrs. Macapagal and Pelaez were sworn into office at last month's Luneta inauguration ceremonies.

On December 30, the first working United Opposition was forged after years of disappointment, frustration and sporadic negotiations. Unity was achieved by the adoption, at the vice-president's Summer House in Baguio City, of a common "Reform Program" prepared by the Liberal Party and the erstwhile Grand Alliance. The keystone of the program was the motto of the United Opposition—their "answer" to the NP's equally stirring "Filipino First" — and this was "Faith in the Filipino".

The "Reform Program" was the product of many minds and many hearts. But it took final shape in the hands of Progressive Party President Manuel Manahan, Pelaez, former Elections Commissioner Rod Perez, Manglapus, and their Liberal Party counterparts, Macapagal, Senator Estanislao Fernandez, and, at the last minute, Ferdinand Marcos.

It was Manglapus who completed the final draft, batting out its polished phrases in three days in his fourth-floor room at Baguio's Country Club. The declaration of "Faith in the Filipino" was especially apt. The United Opposition had neither money, power nor the facilities of government at their command. The sophisticated and urbane were sneering at their mad crusade, for how could this band of Quixotic dreamers, already twice bested in electoral combat, hope to defeat an NP machine which had the resources with which to buy votes, the opportunity to tamper with ballots and, if necessary, the means of discreet coercion? It would require faith in the Filipino, indeed, the skeptics averred, to even hope to win such an election.

The chief architect of the alliance, however, never doubted the outcome. This was Macapagal himself, who risked dissension in the ranks of his own party to bring the Grand Alliance into its fold. In making the decision to offer the GA what his partymen considered extremely attractive terms for the merger, Macapagal manifested the same stubborn quality that is both his greatest asset and his worst liability.

This "stubbornness" is, a sense, a product of his background. Magsaysay was called a "man of the masses". Maca-

pagal literally came from the bottom rung. His father, Urbano, was a vernacular playwright from Lubao—impoverished, as most playwrights are. His mother, Romana Pañgan, was a farm lass from Floridablanca, Pampanga. From the time of his birth in Barrio San Nicolas Primero in Lubao, nothing ever came easily to the young Diosdado. Although he finished his elementary schooling as valedictorian, he almost missed his own graduation because he had no suitable clothes to wear. It was only through the aid of that famed Pampanga philanthropist, Honorio Ventura, that he managed to acquire a law degree from the University of Sto. Tomas.

Nonetheless, Macapagal's educational record is impressive. He was salutatorian of the Pampanga High School. He holds doctorates both in law and in economics. In 1936, he topped the bar examinations.

Macapagal's most valuable education, on the other hand, came from the school of hard knocks. Through the years, he became convinced that anything could be won by determination and sheer grit. The important thing was to decide on what he wanted and then go after it. Thus it was that, as soon as he had been elected vice-president in 1957, Macapagal began his drive for the presidency.

The first step was to obtain leadership of his party. Yulo, who had never been close to the rank-and-file, only half-heartedly attempted to retain his commanding position and soon went into semi-retirement at his Canlubang estate. Macapagal's chief rival was Rep. Cornelio Villareal. When he deposed Villareal, a hostile Old Guard said that Macapagal's "overweening ambition" would divide the LP. He went through with his move anyway, and Villareal became one of his chief lieutenants. A second threat to his leadership was posed by Senator Ambrosio Padilla who made no bones about his own legitimate aspirations to the presidential nomination. Macapagal outmaneuvered the brilliant Padilla and, contrary to expectations, the party remained united.

When he brought the Grand Alliance into the LP on what the Old Guard considered outrageously generous terms — the

vice-presidency for Pelaez and three senatorial berths for the GA — his critics predicted that now “certainly” the party would revolt against the highhandedness of Macapagal. The revolt never materialized.

When Ferdinand Marcos entered his name in the lists as an eleventh-hour contender for the LP presidential nomination, Macapagal's enemies thought that the colorful Ilocos Norte solon would squelch Macapagal in a convention showdown. Instead, Marcos withdrew on the eve of the convention. On January 21, 1961, the convention was convened in the ramshackle Sta. Ana Cabaret, redundant with memories of 15 years ago when Manuel Roxas had launched the Liberal Party as the hope of a young nation. It was Marcos who ascended the platform and nominated Macapagal. As Marcos himself put it only a few weeks ago: “This is why we respect Macapagal — because he makes decisions even against our will. Afterwards we find that he was right.”

The unity of the opposition which emerged out of the smoke-filled, balloon-festooned grand ballroom of the Sta. Ana Cabaret was significant. Its achievement was a foretaste of the growing political maturity which was to be vindicated at the November polls.

In two elections, the opposition had now been cruelly divided by two divergent approaches to the same problem: the defeat of President Garcia's power elite. The right approach, unity, was found in 1961; the wrong, separation, had met disaster in 1957.

Garcia's 1957 “percentage victory” was indirectly spawned by the advent into the picture of a makeshift Third Force which had started out as a “Spirit of Magsaysay Movement” (jokingly called the “*Multo ng Magsaysay*”) but had entered the lists as the Progressive Party of the Philippines. The PPP was composed of men who clung to the “vision splendid” which had once been Magsaysay's before the latter found himself entangled and enmeshed in the mire of political confusion and intrigue. Although, as in any gathering of men (even the original Crusades), there were opportunists among the

Progressives, the leadership of the PPP was centered around men who had abandoned positions of influence and prestige within the Garcia administration to follow their stern and fatal course. Some, like PPP President Manahan himself, former Labor Secretary Eleuterio Adevosos and former Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Manglapus, had held ranking posts in the Nacionalista Cabinet, relinquishing their seats only in the final hour.

In their idealism, the Progressives failed to reckon with a fundamental fact of politics and mass behavior, namely: that for a cause to succeed, that cause must be demonstrated to be not merely good but also effective. In simplest terms, it must be shown that the cause can win. This is why, in almost every instance, businessmen who admired the Progressives' zeal and courage refused to make the more practical move of supplying material support to a fight which they believed could not prosper. Prospective financiers had indicated interest as late as July, 1957, when it seemed that the PPP and Yulo's Liberals might be able to work out a merger or a coalition. When the negotiations collapsed, the business interests which had promised aid suddenly withdrew that backing. Worse, in the closing weeks before the election they channeled this monetary assistance to the Nacionalistas. This hurt the Liberals badly, for what had been anticipated by them as a wide base of financial support narrowed down at the last to about four loyal families who threw their fortunes into the ill-starred campaign.

The painful facts as they emerged from the disaster were: first, that for businessmen whose day-to-day livelihood and continued prosperity are intimately linked with the benevolence and sufferance of the government's financial policies and agencies, "business is business", while sympathy for lost causes is not tax-deductible; and secondly, that the purest ideals may falter at the precinct unless buttressed by the sophisticated apparatus of a political organization capable of delivering the vote.

Nonetheless, Manahan in defeat garnered over 1,100,000 votes out of an aggregate of 6,763,897 registered voters. The

PPP although they failed to elect a single candidate, gave the people an inkling of the power of the independent ballot.

Both candidates and voters were "growing up"—and the test of that breakthrough towards maturity proved to be the campaign of 1961.

#### THE CAMPAIGN: A COMING OF AGE

One of the first things a foreign correspondent or visiting observer is told when he arrives to cover a Philippine election is that it is very difficult to dislodge an incumbent president. The "difficulty" stems from the nature of the presidency itself. For the Chief Executive of the Philippines is perhaps the most powerful president to be found in a working democracy. The Constitution grants him extraordinary privileges, an advantage enhanced by a tradition which has enabled Malacañang to arrogate to itself prerogatives and functions which were not envisioned by the framers of the Constitution or the nation's law-makers.

One such prerogative is the peculiarly Philippine system called the "pork barrel" which affords the president nearly absolute control over the release and apportionment of public works funds and other types of government spending. While Congress approves the annual budget for the fiscal year and outlines in detail where spending is to be directed, no money for public works is actually doled out without the approval of the president. This enables the Chief Executive to pull strings from his official chair with all the *savoir faire* of an Oriental potentate dispensing favors to his loyal subjects. Another source of presidential influence is his appointive power which enables him if he so desires to pack such vital economic agencies as the Central Bank and its Monetary Board, the Department of Finance and its line bureaus such as Internal Revenue, Customs, Treasury, as well as government credit institutions like the Philippine National Bank, the Development Bank of the Philippines, G.S.I.S., etc., with his chosen and trusted men.

Former President Garcia had no qualms about utilizing some of his more salient prerogatives during the campaign. He

travelled around the country either on government plane (such as the Fokker-Friendship), by government-owned railroad or aboard the \$2.5 million presidential yacht obtained from Japanese Reparations, the "*Lapu-lapu*". At each whistle stop or campaign platform, Garcia openly read detailed lists of "pork barrel" or public works allocations granted that specific locality (reminding residents of the area that they had partaken of his official largesse), handed out backpay checks and treasury warrants, or delivered previously unpaid monetary "bonuses" to Juan de la Cruz. His campaigners had at their command all the combined facilities of government and of government-controlled corporations. The Nacionalista propaganda machine which held forth in official headquarters on Sta. Mesa Boulevard was buttressed by the Malacañang Press Office which farmed out legitimate "news" about the movements of the president.

In sharp contrast, then Vice-President Macapagal operated in fact as the proverbial "poor boy". But the Nacionalistas made the mistake, soon after he assumed office, of applying the principle that the vice-president has no other function than waiting for the president to die. At a meeting of the Council of Leaders, the NPs decided not to give Macapagal any portfolio in the Cabinet, although it had previously been the practice to appoint the vice-president concurrently as Secretary of Foreign Affairs. The patent purpose of this strategy was to freeze Macapagal out of the picture. Instead, it had the effect of freeing him to launch a free-wheeling campaign from barrio to barrio which was to take him three times around the country and enable him to cover thrice the territory visited by the late President Magsaysay. In the beginning, Macapagal was allowed to use the navy cutter, "*Ifugao*," aboard which he journeyed to such points as Palawan, the Turtle Islands, and less accessible areas on the Pacific side. But the NPs soon decided that his "thank you" tours were not so much designed to thank the electorate for their votes in 1957 as to solicit their ballots for 1961. When his use of government craft was curtailed, Macapagal took to riding inter-island steamers, paying his way on the railroad, going by private car or contracting private aircraft.

Macapagal's desire to win, as one wag put it, "an election by locomotion", had him risking his life on the most unlikely forms of transportation. In the Visayas, stormy seas almost swamped his frail motor boat. Returning from a perilous trip to the Batanes islands in the far north, defective batteries on his chartered plane came close to short-circuiting his career. But he doggedly pursued his handshaking expeditions on the theory that the hand you shake today may write your name on the ballot tomorrow. He shook so many hands that his palm and fingers blistered and sometimes required medical treatment. By the time election day dawned, however, he had shaken close to six million hands.

In the months immediately preceding the elections, the campaign degenerated into an exchange of name-calling. The Liberals charged that President Garcia and his cabal had "betrayed" the people by enriching themselves in office, by building mansions with expensive swimming pools while most of the people continued to huddle in rude huts or *barong-barongs*, by "mollycoddling" Communists in their ranks. The Nacionalistas countered that the Liberals should not be given another chance to exploit and despoil as they had done during the Quirino Administration. They recalled the "terrorism" of the Liberal era and by "coincidence" a motion picture entitled the "Moises Padilla Story" began playing in movie houses throughout the country. Some NPs even advanced a flippant argument which unluckily backfired. Whom would you rather have, they asked, the Nacionalistas who are already well-fed and contented or the Liberals who have been starved for power the past eight years? They used the simile about the mosquitoes inside the mosquito net who are already satisfied and those outside the net who are still hungry. The Liberals seized on this as an admission that the NPs had been sucking the lifeblood of the nation all along.

The most disgraceful "gimmick" of the campaign was what is now known as "Black Propaganda". Senator Puyat, the NP vice-presidential candidate, was the victim to a certain extent of this low form of vilification which took the shape of a "chain letter" circulated by persons unknown "revealing" the public

and private lives of the entire Puyat clan. The United Opposition, however, kept its campaign on a comparatively high moral plane. There was, to be sure, no need for "Black Propaganda" on their part. They maintained that the actual sins of the Garcia administration were "black" enough.

Macapagal, on the other hand, was the target of a smear campaign unparalleled in the nation's political history. A group of leftwing agitators, whom even President Garcia hesitated to identify with the NP, circulated a sheaf of scurrilous leaflets entitled "Ten Questions" about Macapagal and the "Three Macapagals in History". The "Ten Questions" attempted to identify Macapagal, not with the peasantry of his birth, but with the rich business and landed gentry of Pampanga. The handbill accused him (inaccurately) of having been counsel of the Pasumil and the La Mallorca-Pambusco transportation firm. Other "questions" linked him with the Dimzon hacienda and other wealthy establishments for whom, it was alleged, "he used his legal talents" against Pampanga's downtrodden. The "Three Macapagals" sought to condemn him by association with a Macapagal who had shot Andres Bonifacio and another who had collaborated with foreign interests.

In a strategically fielded series of paid advertisements, the NP propaganda center also tried to link Macapagal with "McCarthyism" and Maliwalu. The first symbolically dubbed him a "witch hunter" who was attempting to taint the Garcia administration with charges of Redism. The second, Maliwalu, recalled the "massacre" of 21 peasants who were seized by temporary policemen on Good Friday, April 7, 1950, in Maliwalu. Pointing out that the "liquidation" had taken place in Macapagal's home province of Pampanga, the NPs resurrected the 11-year old issue to demonstrate that the man from Lubao had done nothing for his constituents since none of the "killers" had been brought to justice. The futility of this far-fetched accusation was demonstrated on election day when the residents of Bacolor town, where Maliwalu is located, went to the polls and cast their ballots for Macapagal at the proportion of five-to-one.

Other advertisements carried photographs of Macapagal with the title: "Wanted: For Anti-Filipinism". NP ads claimed Macapagal was guilty of "mental dishonesty", lampooned his promises, especially the assertion that he was "willing to go to jail" if he could not stop corruption. The NP information center's ads flirted with libel to assert that he was "in truth and in fact a tool of alien interests". One advertisement concluded: "Mr. Macapagal is a puppet".

The use of the value-words "alien" and "puppet" were cleverly designed to arouse antipathy to Macapagal. Was it coincidental that they, too, were reminiscent of the line taken consistently by Radio Peking? The Liberals thought so. Replying to some of the propaganda charges, the LPs ran ads of their own calling the accusations: "The Big Red Lie".

The worst and most disgusting attempt at vilification came in the form of a pamphlet entitled, "The Life and Loves of Eva", directed at Mrs. Macapagal. By hindsight, it appears that the pro-NP black propagandists overreached themselves. A wave of revulsion among decent elements generated votes for Macapagal and the U.O.

In the final analysis, what was actually at test was the approach to the electorate by each party.

The Nacionalistas still clung to the Tammany Hall school of bossism. They relied on what Alexander Hamilton referred to as the "power elite" — the baronial cliques and "big power" politicians who had traditionally delivered the vote. There were the Rodriguezes, the Lopezes, the Zuluetas, the Sabidos, the Primicias and their precinct-level organizations. And there were funds aplenty, the NPs boasted, to accomplish the task of lining up the vote and bringing the voters to the polls.

The Liberals and the United Opposition, predictably, had little money. This may have been providential, since it compelled them to conduct the only type of campaign they could afford—a literal house to house, barrio to barrio, "grassroots" drive. "Don't sell your vote," the U.O. told the electorate. "Your ballot is your stake in good government. On election day, it makes you equal to the rich and powerful."

The LP march to Malacañang started erratically enough. At one point, eight months before the election, it seemed that Garcia was pulling ahead. But the drive gained momentum after the riotous NP convention of last June and by August Macapagal had a lead—concededly slim, but an advantage nonetheless. The brief candidacy of Senator Rogelio de la Rosa, erstwhile screen idol and former brother-in-law of Macapagal himself, threatened to becloud the outcome of the two-party struggle. We can only guess as to how many votes “Roger” might have pulled away from both Garcia and Macapagal and whose political hopes might have been scuttled as a result. In a series of discreet negotiations, the LPs convinced de la Rosa to abandon his candidacy on November 4—ten days before the balloting—and pledge his support to Macapagal.

The dramatic impact of the de la Rosa switch was only one in a succession of developments, either planned or unscheduled, which ultimately overturned the Nacionalista applecart. From the onset, the LPs waged almost desperate psychological warfare against the NPs, for their overriding fear was not that Macapagal and the U.O. ticket might lose in the balloting but that they would lose in the counting. Early in the campaign, the LPs “exposed” what they called “Operation Pioneer”, which they claimed was a plot to reshuffle PC provincial commanders to enable officers loyal to the administration to take over politically vital areas. Then they “unearthed” two other projects named “Operation Torpedo” and “Operation Cherry,” calculated, they maintained, to undermine the Liberals and assure NP victory through every means possible. Thus the LPs managed to keep the Nacionalistas off-balance with a series of “revelations”, substantiated or not, that the ballot would be “tampered with” by the ruling party and that cheating, coercion and vote-buying were part of the battle plan of the NP. On the eve of the elections, Senator Marcos issued a stern radio-television warning to all armed forces personnel that anyone who engaged in electioneering or terrorism would be summarily court-martialed.

The 1961 elections have been billed as proof that at last the “Filipino voter has come of age”. Now that the initial wave

of emotion and enthusiasm has begun to recede, we can begin to assess the true implications of how the nation voted.

The present-day "maturity" of the Filipino is gauged more accurately by the manner in which an alert public thwarted in most places the possibility of election graft than in the trend of the voting. During the halcyon days of the Magsaysay "crusade" in 1953, the efficacy of public vigilance was harnessed in a spirited but rather disorganized manner, the only concerted effort taking place in Manila itself. The 1961 elections saw the first experiment in applying the lessons of 1953 on a nationwide basis, namely "Operation Quick Count".<sup>1</sup>

When "Operation Quick Count" was first announced in mid-year, it was hailed as a noble undertaking but many of the the pundits and observers were skeptical about its succeeding. The logistics of the plan were fantastic—it envisioned posting volunteer teams at every precinct to record the tally to an OQC headquarters in the municipality which would collate the figures and transmit them to OQC provincial headquarters, which in turn would relay the unofficial provincial results to Manila. How to raise funds for this ambitious enterprise, recruit volunteer workers and weld this disparate mass of amateurs into a team which would be able to function with professional competence through election night and the succeeding days appeared problems too complicated to lick.

Nonetheless, the Manila Times publishing company launched OQC and hoped for the best. The national coordinator of the project was *The Times'* Juan Quesada and an impressive board of directors was formed which included such impressive names as Francisco Ortigas, Dean Alejandro Roces (now Education Secretary), Benito Prieto, Greg Feliciano, Belen Abreu, Helen Benitez, Leon Hontiveros, Col. Salvador Villa and Ramon V. del Rosario. The response exceeded all expectations. Individuals and civic clubs offered their services—the Lions, Jaycees, Knights of Columbus, the Philippine Institute of Accountants (with a nationwide membership of qualified tabula-

<sup>1</sup> See Notes & Comment, p. 145, this issue.

tors, CPAs, engineers, surveyors), other media such as *The Evening News*. OQC announced that its statistics would be available immediately to all media of information, whether the press, radio or television.

OQC's performance confounded the skeptics. By midnight of November 14, the unofficial tallies from all over began to pour in. Within 15 hours after the precincts closed, the nation knew that Macapagal had been elected.

Anguished Nacionalistas began to hint darkly that OQC had been a Liberal plot, but the public refused to accept the insinuation. The Liberals squelched any latent moves to discredit OQC by unveiling an alleged NP last-ditch scheme to repudiate Quick Count and prepare the minds of the nation for a Garcia victory in the "long count" of the Commission on Elections. The Comelec proved its own integrity by hastening its own count. Chairman Gaudencio and Commissioners Sixto Brillantes and Genaro Vizarra stood fast against President Garcia's subsequently expressed contention that the Comelec's telegraphic returns were not accurate.

Macapagal continued his psychological offensive during the days following the balloting by stressing repeatedly that any officials found falsifying the returns would be prosecuted. If anyone had the intention of doing so, the implied threat must have dissuaded him. By December 12, when Congress met to officially canvass the national tally, the question had become academic. Macapagal and Pelaez were proclaimed the following day, the latter beating his nearest rival, Serging Osmeña Jr., by a vote of 2,394,440 to 2,190,424.

Osmeña's surprisingly strong showing merits mention, for he had run as an Independent candidate without a party machinery of his own. An evaluation of his vote properly belongs to another article, but it might be attributed to a number of factors. One of them was the support of the *Iglesia ni Kristo*, Bishop Felix Manalo's militant and politically-minded sect which Serging claimed could muster a voting strength of 850,000 but which, according to more moderate estimates, must have aggregated only some 250,000 votes. Another was the

unexpected and tragic timing of the death of Serging's universally revered father, former President Osmeña, who succumbed the month preceding the elections. The two had not been on the best of terms, but Serging carried the honored name.

Now that the dust has settled, it has become apparent that the mandate of the electorate was not as sweeping and as complete for the United Opposition as was originally believed. Although the U.O. captured six of the eight Senate seats in dispute, 77 Nacionalistas were elected to the Lower House as against 27 Liberals. Before the elections, the NPs had decisively controlled the Senate, with only five liberals in the 24-man body. The continuing presence of 12 NPs and one NP-voting Nationalist-Citizens Party senator (Lorenzo Tañada) still gives the NPs an edge over the 11 Liberals in the new senate. In the Lower House, the LPs gained only ten more seats.

Although Macapagal's 650,000-vote margin is impressive, it did not constitute a real "landslide". He garnered 55 per cent of the 6,456,080 votes cast against 45 per cent for Garcia. This means that 11 out of every 20 voters cast their ballots in favor of Macapagal and 9 for Garcia. Where Macapagal had faltered was, surprisingly, in the sophisticated city vote. Out of the country's 37 cities, Garcia managed to carry 18 with 19 going for Macapagal. In effect, Macapagal received only 17,333 more votes than his opponent in the aggregate vote of all the cities—and he carried Manila, traditional stronghold of opposition candidates, by a disappointing 55,000-vote majority. This would indicate that Macapagal failed to capture the imagination of the average city voter and may have alienated urban votes by his perennial harping on the theme that he was a "poor boy" who had come from "humble beginnings".

But, while Macapagal was "colorless" to the urbane, his appeal was magic to the rural voter. Macapagal made no bones about the fact that he wanted to be the poor man's president. His narrative of the hardships and poverty of his early life identified him with the *barrio* masses as one of their own. Monotonous in speech in the cities, Macapagal came to life in the rural hustings, holding out to the "forgotten" the hope of a

better future, plunging recklessly into crowds as Magsaysay did, shaking hands and embracing all indiscriminately.

Equally impressive was the roster of triumph in the senatorial slate. The "orphaned" men of Magsaysay—Manglapus, Manahan and Rodrigo won first, second and fourth places. NP reelectionist Lorenzo Sumulong, who had his own reputation for honesty and had distinguished himself in the United Nations by his clash with Russia's Nikita Krushchev, scored an outstanding personal victory by finishing third. The only other Nacionalista who made the grade was former Congressman Jose J. Roy of Tarlac, whose record as a legislator stood him in good stead.

Despite the incomplete mandate given by the electorate to the United Opposition, it is clear that the tide has turned in Philippine politics. The "machine" is not dead, as the election results would indicate when seen in retrospect, but it is dying. No longer is it impossible to win without money or an expensive organization, as the relatively penurious trio, Manglapus, Manahan and Rodrigo proved. The individual voter can no longer be bought or sold as chattel, for he has discovered that his ballot can set him free.

The events of the first few weeks of January, with trouble brewing in Congress over petty partisanship, are fair warning that the battle is far from won. But the "Faith in the Filipino" which was sounded by the idealists almost as a forlorn hope has been vindicated. And that is enough of a token that, in the years to come, the dragon will finally be slain.