End of an Era

BY FREDA KIRCHWEY

The shock of the President's death, the profound dismay, as powerfully felt in Moscow and Paris and Mexico City as in Washington, spring from something even deeper than love and respect for a great leader. The people have lost a leader, but they have lost something more. With the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt an era has ended; and the people of the world are moved by apprehension as well as sorrow.

This feeling has little to do with the personality or purposes of the new President; little to do with the great tasks of finishing a war and making a peace. It has everything to do with the role Mr. Roosevelt has played, the degree to which he came to symbolize, for a whole struggling generation, their hope of security and freedom, of release from intolerable oppression.

We may tell ourselves, as hundreds of leading citizens are daily telling us in print and over the air, that we must face with something of Mr. Roosevelt's own courage the battles that lie ahead; we may explain to ourselves the excellent resources of compensation and recuperation to be found in the democratic system of government. But these reminders are hardly necessary. For neither the American people nor the people of other lands will yield to despair. They will do their duty, and our government will adjust itself to its loss. Without doubt every official in Washington, from Mr. Truman down, has summoned all his powers to meet the challenge the death of his chief has flung down. This rallying of forces may be taken for granted. But even courage and a sense of responsibility will not be enough to exorcise the deep uneasiness that has lent a tone of desperation to the great outpouring of emotion we have witnessed. When people lose a friend they grieve; when they lose a cherished symbol their world is shaken.

It is necessary to recognize and examine this fact. President Roosevelt's hold on the imagination of people everywhere is a phenomenon whose immense political importance will be even more apparent now than while he lived. We shall realize now to what degree he was identified in the minds of men and women in other countries with the disinterested power of America, its reckless vitality, its commitment to the cause of freedom and international recuperation. All these qualities with which a suffering world has hopefully endowed this country were embodied in the person of our dead President. To countless millions, he was America.

We shall realize, too, how completely he had come to represent in our own minds similar elements in the nation's domestic make-up. The ordinary people of the United States, had, to an extraordinary degree, accepted the President's acts as a measure of the country's advancement and consigned to his hands their interests and hopes. They did not trust the Democratic Party or the Administration as a whole; they trusted Roosevelt. Even when he seemed to compromise or retreat they were content to wait until he found it expedient to swing back to his own basic line. To millions of Americans, he was the New Deal, all it gave or promised them personally.

The political consequences of this sense of identification between the leader who has gone and the people who followed him will be felt in every part of our society. Men fighting in the mountains of northern Italy, workers on assembly lines in Detroit or Los Angeles will be inclined to new ways of thinking and acting because he is dead. Heads of states will orient their policies differently. Business men will make new plans.

When I say an era has ended I do not imply that the Administration under the leadership of Harry S. Truman will move to wipe out the social gains of the past twelve years or falter in the prosecution of the war and the preparation for peace. That nothing drastic will happen is indicated by the first acts of the new President. It may even turn out that certain important measures planned and initiated by Mr. Roosevelt will be carried through more easily by Mr. Truman. The very fact that he is a neutral figure and a conciliatory sort of man may tend to dissolve the tensions that had developed
around the towering person of his predecessor, The Administration will do all it can, I believe, to mitigate the anxiety of the people, here and abroad, by maintaining at least for the immediate future the program and governmental set-up established under Mr. Roosevelt.

But a basic change has occurred just the same, and it would be dishonest to deny it. The balance of political forces has shifted to the right. Anti-Roosevelt newspapers announce this with decorous satisfaction even in the midst of their eulogies of the late President. The shift will probably be an unobtrusive one; men will be brought to greater power whom the President also used; other men will resign not because they are thrust out but because they will no longer feel the underlying democratic drift that sustained so many progressive office-holders in spite of disappointments and setbacks. The "right-of-center, feet-on-the-ground liberalism" of Harry S. Truman will gradually be translated into practical political language.

If the substance of the New Deal is to be salvaged and if this country is to adopt the measures necessary to prevent post-war collapse and unemployment and the political consequences that would follow them, a new and much more solid alignment of progressive forces is called for. Even under the influence of Mr. Roosevelt these forces had to create all the pressure they could muster to offset the pressure from the right. Now they are on their own, with a harder job to do. They will succeed only if they realize their exact situation and make plans to meet it.

That situation has been partly shaped by the profound identification referred to above between the people—especially the people with conscious progressive leanings—and the leader they have lost. Throughout the last twelve years the progressive political movement in this country has slowly crystallized around Mr. Roosevelt. It has not developed—or had a chance to develop—an independent program or national leadership. The most effective, politically conscious sections of organized labor owe their very birth and growth to the New Deal. Roosevelt has been their leader and their permanent candidate; he has been the image of their hopes. In the President and the New Deal lay the strength of the whole progressive movement—and its weakness. In the degree to which American progressivism has been dependent on the President, it must experience a readjustment of values, a process of reintegration, before it can face adequately the new demands which will be made upon it. The progressive forces in America will have to grow up now and grow up fast. Events will not wait upon a slow process of maturing.

Luckily some progress toward independence has been measured in the last year. The forces marshaled in the C. I. O.—Political Action Committee have shown already their capacity for discipline and militant action. That they drew much of their vitality from their union with the President cannot be denied: it was the P. A. C. fighting for Franklin D. Roosevelt that generated power. But the workers who provide the mass base for the committee are a cohesive group that can develop its own program and find its own candidates. At present it is strongly opposed to the idea of a third party. That attitude was inevitable during the Roosevelt era; whether it can be maintained in the future depends upon a variety of factors. Chief among them will be its success in the 1946 elections. The Congressional fight next year will provide the first major test of the capacity, not only of the P. A. C. but of American progressives of all sorts, to meet the challenge of independent political action.

Leaders must be found. Many will undoubtedly come out of the labor movement; Sidney Hillman himself is fast achieving stature as a national figure. Others will come out of the ranks of the government. The future of such men as Mr. Wallace and Mr. Ikies is uncertain; sooner or later they may be available. And one person who has been cut off from active political leadership is now, tragically, released for a new role: Eleanor Roosevelt, the best New Dealer of them all, should certainly be pressed into service. We know her well enough to feel certain that neither grief nor desire for rest and retirement will for long isolate her from the fight to which she has contributed so much energy and valor and wisdom.

The death of Mr. Roosevelt may mean the coming of age of the progressive political forces in America. If it means that, then slowly the dismay of the people, here and throughout the world, will be replaced by a new sense of power and confidence.

**America and the Coalition**

**BY J. ALVAREZ DEL VAYO**

_The deep anxiety with which the world learned of the death of President Roosevelt proves how delicate and complicated is considered the task of organizing the peace. It was the most eloquent recognition that, complete as the military victory of the United Nations is certain to be, the political problems multiplying ahead of us are both difficult and decisive. Most important of them all is the problem of maintaining unity among the victors in the years to come._

_We must not forget that the war will end with fascism defeated in the field but still alive and waiting to benefit by any disagreement among the Allies. The problem is too large to be solved by the punishment of a few thousand war criminals or by spectacular trials of fascists and collaborators. The only guaranty against the success of the Nazi plan for surviving military defeat lies in Allied unity. That is why it was necessary to support the decisions made at Yalta; Yalta cemented the coalition, and the continuance of cooperation among Russia, Britain, and the United States is the essential condition of peace. We may hope that the coalition will be strengthened, enlarged, made more democratic—but it must be maintained. That President Roosevelt understood. He understood what everyone with a sense of political responsibility would have understood if controversies over Russia had not distorted their political thinking—the absolute necessity of working closely with the Soviet Union._

_The realistic approach manifested in Mr. Churchill's now famous speech on the day Germany attacked Russia won overwhelming approval. President Roosevelt carried forward Mr. Churchill's realism. He saw beyond the hour when Germany would collapse, a beaten nation, and was convinced of the need, not only for emergency collaboration, but for perma-_.

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