

## THE TRAGIC DEATH OF ANTONIO LUNA

By: Carmencita Herrera Acosta  
Phil. Free Press  
Vol. 54, No.22, June 2, 1962  
p. 26, 58-59.

It was June in Paris of 1899 when Juan Luna received news of the assassination of his brother, General Antonio Luna, in Cabanatuan. The news was both tragic and shocking: tragic, since it concerned the untimely death of a young general, only 31, who possessed the intelligence and stamina necessary to effect Filipino victory during the Philippine War of Independence; shocking because General Antonio Luna was killed not by enemy bullets which were whizzing past during that period of war but by the treacherous hands of his countrymen, his own subordinate soldiers who rebelled at the strict military discipline he enforced.

Painter Juan Luna rushed frantic letters to Hongkong, seat of the committee in charge of the diplomatic activities of the Philippine Revolutionary Government, asking for a detailed account of the tragic circumstances surrounding General Luna's death.

But Juan Luna never received a satisfactory answer - not even when he took it upon himself to carry out an inquiry regarding his brother's assassination, for on his way to Manila from Paris on December of that same year, he was the victim of a heart attack in Hong Kong.

Friends and close associates of the general were then engaged in active combat in the Filipino-American War and they had not the time to search into the facts of Luna's assassination. Finally the war ended on April 17, 1902, when General Miguel Malvar of Batangas was left no alternative but to lay down his arms.

This brave and noble general had carried on to the last, thereby prolonging the Filipino fight for freedom for a whole year, even as Aguinaldo, commander-in-chief of the Philippine Revolutionary Army, had been consequently called for a cease-fire in April of 1901.

General Antonio Luna was founder and editor of *La Independencia*, the newspaper espousing the cause of the Filipino libertarian struggle. Up to the time of his death, he was commander-in-chief of the Filipino forces in Central Luzon. Both Rizal and Mabini had a very high regard for his military competence. In June of 1896, two months before Bonifacio's Katipunan was discovered by Spanish authorities, Dr. Pio Valenzuela informed Rizal, who was exiled in Dapitan, Mindanao, of the forthcoming Bonifacio-led revolution against Spanish authority in the Philippines. Dr. Rizal expressed disapproval, claiming that the populace was not yet ready to plunge into a state of war. However, should a revolution be deemed necessary at a later time, Rizal recommended at a later time, Rizal recommended Antonio Luna as its leader. In Mabini's historical work, "*La Revolucion Filipina*," written four years after Luna's demise, the Sublime Paralytic laments the premature death of this great general and refers to him as the "firmest support" of the Revolution.

Like Rizal, Antonio Luna viewed with disfavor Bonifacio's move to commit the country to war. His circle of acquaintances included many pro-revolution patriots, so that when the Philippine Revolution did break out in 1896, he was charged with alleged partisanship in the Katipunan and was deported to Madrid. In time, close friends of Luna succeeded in obtaining his release through the Spanish monarch. Prior to his return to the war-stricken Philippine Islands, Luna studied Spanish and German military methods. By that time he had made up his mind to join his compatriots on the battlefield. Aguinaldo, commander-in-chief of the Philippine Revolutionary Army, saw in Luna the answer to the country's need of an able military strategist. He appointed him commander-in-chief of the Filipino forces in Central Luzon. This was a major post, next in importance to that of Aguinaldo's, considering that the seat of revolutionary activities was in Central Luzon.