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A Link With Our Pre-Revolutionary Past Memorias

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Book Reviews

A LINK WITH OUR PRE-REVOLUTIONARY PAST

MEMORIAS. Autobiografia de Zoilo S. Diaz. Editado por A. Arceo-Ortega. Quezon City: The Phoenix Press, 1969. viii, 113 pp. (plus a ten-page supplement), 21 photographs.

Don Zoilo Diaz (who is now 91) was a 16-year-old student at the Ateneo de Manila when the Revolution broke out. From their college dormitory in Intramuros they could hear the booming of cannon in Cavite across the Bay. But they heard little else of what went on outside, except that they heard of the arrival of Spanish reinforcements and of the execution of several patriots, including that of Rizal in December 1896.

Of Rizal's execution, Mr. Diaz says: "We were aware of the momentous events in the last days of Dr. Jose Rizal. We even knew the priests who ministered to him and who eventually obtained his retraction and convinced him to return to the old Faith. On the fateful day of Rizal's death the mournful procession to Bagumbayan passed behind the Ateneo, and we, strictly forbidden to look out of the windows, could only listen with troubled hearts to the ponderous steps of marching soldiers."

Zoilo Diaz was born in Talisay, Negros Occidental, and at the age of 9 he attended a private preparatory school in Molo, Iloilo, conducted by Don Manuel Locsin. In June 1890 he was taken to Manila and enrolled at the Ateneo. Being from out of town, he had to live in the school dormitories. He remained at the Ateneo for eight years, with the exception of the summer months which were spent at home.

The students at the Ateneo were divided into three groups with separate dormitories: the Little Boys ("Pequeños"), the Intermediate Boys ("Medianos"), and the Seniors ("Mayores"). Of his teachers

in the earlier grades, Mr. Diaz recalls Brother Berenguelas (who taught him "calligraphy"), Father Sauret (who taught him music) and Fathers Vives and Arnalot who taught the other subjects. Of his professors in the baccalaureate course, he remembers Fathers Clotet, Mayoral, Vilallonga and Alberich. They taught letters (which included poetry, rhetoric, and the three languages—Latin, Greek and Spanish) and Sciences (which included philosophy, natural history, mathematics, chemistry and physics).

Because the Ateneo was a college and not a university, the students had to present themselves to the Dominican Fathers at the University of Santo Tomas for a two-hour oral examination (one hour in Letters, another hour in Sciences) before they could be granted the Bachelor of Arts degree.

At the outbreak of the second phase of the Revolution in 1898, Mr. Diaz, back in Negros, was appointed an officer in the Revolutionary army under General Juan Araneta, Minister of War in the Negros Government. But after six months, Diaz left for Manila and thence for Europe where, after a sojourn in Paris, he studied engineering, first at Lille and then at Grenoble. Having obtained his Certificate he went to the United States to study at Cornell, and then took a job as designer for a bridge-construction firm in Oswego, New York.

Returning to the Philippines, Mr. Diaz served as "technical director" in the construction of the first two sugar centrals in Negros: that in Cabanbanan (1910) and that in Lumangub (1912). He was also supervising engineer in the construction of a third sugar central, that of Talisay-Silay (1919).

One point in these Memoirs merits attention. It occurs on page 54 of the English edition (page 64 of the Spanish): "The year 1936 was a period of great significance for me. In my eight years as a boarder at the Ateneo, I was one of the most religious students in school. I was in fact a conscientious 'Conciliario' in the 'Congregación Mariana' [Sodality]. But through the years I had neglected the practice of receiving the Holy Sacraments and every day going back to them was becoming more difficult. From the time I left school in 1898 until 1936 I had not gone near the confessional. Nevertheless I never neglected to hear Mass every Sunday no matter where I happened to be and I believe that for this reason God did not abandon me. With the coming celebration of the International Eucharistic Congress in Manila, I felt that here was another chance to reconcile myself to God.

"To overcome certain difficulties, I asked Jose Gastón, my nephew by affinity, to find me a confessor. He did not lose time in communicating with the Reverend Father Selga who gave me an appointment in his residence at the Observatory. And right there, after a good

confession, I received absolution. In the Luneta where thousands of people were gathered to celebrate the International Eucharistic Congress, I received Holy Communion. From that time on, I practiced my obligations as a good Christian."

Mr. Diaz, twice a widower, now lives, surrounded by the affection (which he gratefully acknowledges) of children, grandchildren and relatives. From the tone of his narrative, it is obvious that he is of a sunny disposition. Even at his advanced age, he still makes an occasional flying trip to Manila. He unveiled the Ateneo Memorial for the War Dead on 8 December 1969, and he revisited his Alma Mater on 13 February 1970 (on which occasion he gave the Spanish edition of his book to the present reviewer, autographed with trembling hand but with many a laugh).

His Memoirs, published in Spanish, have also been translated into English. The English version (completed in April 1969) contains 106 pages, but without the 10-page supplement which brings the Spanish edition up-to-date.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

FOREIGNERS IN THE PHILIPPINES IN 1600

RELACION DE LAS ISLAS FILIPINAS—THE PHILIPPINES IN 1600. By Pedro Chirino, S.J., translated by Ramón Echevarria. Manila: Historical Conservation Society, XV, 1969. 499 pp.

A NEW VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD. By William Dampier, with an introduction by Sir Albert Gray and a new introduction by Percy Adams. New York: Dover Publications, 1968. 376 pp.

The authors of both of these books were familiar with the Philippines. Pedro Chirino was a Jesuit missionary who was principally active in the Visayas region between 1590-1635. William Dampier was an English adventurer whose travels took him to the Philippines in 1687-1688.

Chirino's *Relación* is a standard source of information on the extremely important period of early evangelization. With sympathy, understanding and clarity the Jesuit missionary described the peoples, customs and environment which he and his fellow-missionaries encountered. Methods of evangelization and their relative success are recounted in detail, making his account almost indispensable for the study of the Philippines at the time of its contact with Spain.

The Historical Conservation Society is once again to be congratulated for making available in an inexpensive edition a minor classic