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Rizal and Republican Spain, by Sarkisyanz

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Book Reviews and Notes



Rizal and Republican Spain and other Rizalist Essays. By Manuel Sarkisyanz. Manila: National Historical Institute, 1995. 223 pages.

"It was in Spain that my perdition came," said Rizal.
(Pablo Pastells, S.J.)

Much has been written of Rizal and his works but much still remains to be said of him. This book of Professor Sarkisyanz explores Rizal, the Spain that influenced his views, and the Spain that killed him. He vividly describes the events that lead to Rizal's execution by trying to review details culled from various historians and documents. With this broad collection of details he comes up with an impressive analysis of the sociopolitical milieu during Rizal's period. On the one hand, Professor Sarkisyanz clearly defines the liberal and republican ideals that existed in Spain which heavily influenced Rizal's own philosophy and encouraged him to seek reforms for the Philippines. On the other hand, Sarkisyanz presents the resentment and fears of clerical Carlists, who held power in Spanish Philippines and who worked untiringly until Rizal was put to death.

Chapter 2 is an interesting survey of the ideas that are expounded in greater detail in the following chapters. It clarifies the kind of Spain that Rizal looked up to and the Spain that dominated the Philippines. As explained in Chapter 1, the book was written to show the other Spain which is virtually unknown, compared to the Spain that killed Rizal. It shows the tremendous changes that were happening in Spain at the time Rizal was studying there. The spread of democratic ideals and the cry for the establishment of a republican Spain dominated the political atmosphere and certainly encouraged Rizal and his companions to dream and work, that such changes would also happen in the Philippines.

The core of the book resides in Chapter 5, which draws a very thorough exposition of the development of liberal ideas and the growth of republicanism within the Spain of Rizal. It describes how, even when the Republicans were already in power in Spain, their policies could still not be carried out in Spanish Philippines. It is direct in pointing out that clerical power was much too entrenched in the Philippines. The friars resisted fiercely any

attempt to impose new policies such as equal rights for Spaniards, Creoles and Indios because they believed that "precisely enlightening the Indio would weaken monastic domination."

Another important idea that surfaces is Rizal's steadfast belief in reforms and assimilation to Mother Spain. With the various support and encouragement that he and other reformists received from key persons in the republican movement in Spain, they believed that conditions in the Philippines could thereby improve.

The book also devotes two chapters to the key Spaniards who influenced Rizal. One was Pi y Margall. "So important and decisive was the influence of Pi y Margall's human and intellectual personality on Rizal's life and thought that I believe that the latter would remain an enigma unless one knows the famous Catalan." The other person was Rizal's professor, Miguel Morayta, who inculcated in his students the "virus of reform, assimilationism and emancipation."

One can truly praise the depth by which Professor Sarkisyanz attempts to develop his thesis on Rizal and the influence that Republican Spain had on him. He is direct in opposing certain assertions made by historians and writers such as Fr. John Schumacher and Leon Ma. Guerrero. He points out the weaknesses of these assertions. At other points he supplies additional information that he deems vital to make these scholars' assertions balanced and not one-sided.

The book, however, suffers from trying to be too comprehensive. In many parts, it deals too deeply into the origins of Spanish democracy and republicanism, so that it loses its focus on Rizal and his relationship with this Spain. It also includes two chapters on the veneration of Rizal and the question of whether his attitudes were middle-class. These two topics depart from the theme of Rizal and Republican Spain but precede the chapters on the two important republicans that influenced Rizal, making the reader lose his way briefly in this rather interesting terrain.

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Women of a Lesser Cost: Female Labour, Foreign Exchange and Philippine Development. By Sylvia Chant and Cathy McIlwaine. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1995.

This ambitious exploratory study looks at three different sectors of employment dominated by women laborers—export manufacturing, international tourism, and the "hospitality" or sex work industry. The book compares interrelationships among employment, migration, and household organiza-