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## Towards a Radical Rizal

Floro Quibuyen



The complex problem of nineteenth century Philippine nationalism, according to Setsuho Ikehata (1989, 78–81), boils down to two questions: What was the content of the nationalism that gave birth to the Philippine revolution? And what was the historic process that spawned this nationalism? So far, notes Ikehata, a consensus among nationalist historians exists, based on the theoretical framework set by Agoncillo and Constantino. But recent perspectives from a younger crop of historians, ushered in by the “paradigm-setting,” “history from below” (*Pasyon*) hermeneutic of Reynaldo Ileto, have “posed certain challenges that make a reconsideration necessary” (78). A definitive synthesis is, of course, a “monumental task.” This article is a small step in what Ikehata terms the “uphill trek to tackle the problem” of nationalism and the Philippine revolution, by doing a critique of the “existing consensus.”

Among Filipino historians, the late Professor Teodoro Agoncillo and Dr. Renato Constantino stand out for their dominant influence in the writing of Philippine history, a scholarly influence so compelling that they have set the tone on how Philippine history courses, in particular Philippine Institutions 100 (Rizal: Life and works), should be taught. Their perspectives have shaped post-colonial Filipinos’ understanding of how the nationalist movement developed, and of the role played by certain individuals and organizations, e.g., Rizal and the Liga; Bonifacio and the Katipunan.

Agoncillo (1976; 1956) was the first to set the nationalist view when he initiated the writing of Philippine history from “the Filipino point

This is based on Chapter 2 of my dissertation, “Imagining the Nation: Rizal, Philippine Nationalism and American Hegemony,” (Political Science Department, University of Hawaii at Manoa, May 1996).

of view," i.e., from the perspective of the nationalist struggle against colonialism. This was echoed by Renato Constantino (1975; 1978) who forcefully set forth the thesis that the common thread in our history is the continuing struggle for national liberation.

For both Agoncillo and Constantino, the crucial period in Philippine history is the nineteenth century nationalist movement, in particular the Philippine Revolution. Both address two critical corollary questions: Which class bore the main brunt of the national liberation struggle? And whom should we venerate as the heroes of this struggle?

Constantino (1969, 6) says that "a proper understanding of our history . . . will serve to demonstrate how our present has been distorted by a faulty knowledge of our past." But herein, precisely, is the problem. How do we determine a "true," "undistorted" knowledge of Philippine past? Though it has become axiomatic, thanks to Agoncillo and Constantino, that Filipino historians write a history of the Philippines from a nationalist perspective. The nagging theoretical issue is: who defines the nationalist perspective?

In his 1974 Professorial Chair Lecture, "Prelude to 1896," Agoncillo (1974, 11) writes:

I cannot accept the traditional interpretation that the Reform Movement led to the Revolution of 1896, that is to say, that it caused the Revolution. This interpretation is far-fetched and is not based on historical facts. What are the facts? First, the reformist were not for independence but for making the Philippines a province of Spain. Second, the reformists were not anti-Spaniard or anti-Spain but only anti-friar and, consequently, for the repatriation of the friars to Spain. Third, the reformists did not believe in armed revolution. This was dramatized by Rizal in his *El Filibusterismo* and in his "Manifesto to the Filipino People" which he issued while he was a prisoner in Fort Santiago prior to his execution. Finally, the Revolution, when it exploded, was denounced by the intellectuals and the wealthy. This was dramatized by Antonio Luna who denounced the Katipunan and the revolution that the Society initiated. Against these facts, I do not see any validity in the traditional interpretation that the Reform Movement led to the Revolution. If at all, it delayed the coming of the Revolution.

Agoncillo, posits a fundamental dichotomy between Reform and Revolution, and between the two classes that carried each movement. The reformists were middle class intellectuals called *ilustrados*, and the "true" revolutionaries were the masses. In the Philippines, the Reform movement was spearheaded by Jose Rizal's *La Liga Filipina*,

and the revolutionary movement by Andres Bonifacio's Katipunan. In his award-winning *Revolt of the Masses*, Agoncillo (1956, 283) writes that the "middle class" reformists proved to be "the bulwark of the Spanish reactionary party," too preoccupied with securing their own positions and promoting their own interests to provide effective leadership in the anti-colonial struggle. Thus, they incurred "the hatred of the masses" (282). When Rizal returned to the Philippines in 1892, he initiated a new movement for the "study and application of reforms." La Liga Filipina, which sprang from this initiative, "personified the middle class," to whom "it was inconceivable that the unlettered masses should be given the privileges of their respectable group" (106). The Liga thus "set up a sort of caste system from which the unlettered commoners were contemptuously excluded" (282). In Agoncillo's perspective, therefore, there was a basic antagonism between the middle class reformists or ilustrados and the masses.

Constantino proceeds on the basis of Agoncillo's fundamental dichotomy, although he is more shrewd in his analysis of the relationship between the ilustrados' Propaganda Movement and the masses' Katipunan. Constantino accepts Agoncillo's essentialist characterizations, i.e., that the masses had a revolutionary consciousness born of praxis under three centuries of colonial oppression, while the middle class ilustrados were only concerned with promoting their economic interests, and thus, were basically cautious and conservative vis-a-vis colonial rule. But Constantino goes one step further than Agoncillo. He credits the articulate and educated ilustrados for providing the "inarticulate" masses, who heretofore had an "inchoate" revolutionary consciousness, with a coherent political theory—the ideology of European liberalism. The singular contribution of Bonifacio was in synthesizing the liberal ideology of the ilustrados with the inchoate revolutionary consciousness of the inarticulate masses. Through Bonifacio's intellectual and organizational gifts, therefore, the Katipunan became the politically sophisticated vanguard of the revolutionary movement (Constantino 1973, 1969).

But, in explaining the course of the Revolution and the nationalist movement, Constantino falls back on Agoncillo's primordial dichotomy of classes in nineteenth century Philippine society. The efforts of Bonifacio and his Katipunan were thwarted by the reformism and collaborationist politics of the ilustrados. The Revolution failed because it was betrayed by the assimilationist and self-serving middle class. For Constantino (1969, 2-3) the prime example of this vacillating, ambivalent, and ultimately counter-revolutionary

class is the Philippines' national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, who "repudiated the Revolution [and] placed himself against Bonifacio and those Filipinos who were fighting for the country's liberty." Because of Rizal's anti-revolutionary stance, argues Constantino, "the general regard for our revolution is not as high as it otherwise would be. On the other hand, our understanding of Rizal and his role in our national development remains superficial." Constantino, thus, blames the Filipinos' misplaced veneration of Rizal as the key factor in their lack of understanding and disregard for the Philippine Revolution.

But how did the people of the nineteenth century perceive events? Indeed, apropos of Agoncillo, what are the "historical facts"? What was the nineteenth century reading of Rizal and the Philippine revolution? We cannot simply presume a conflict of perspectives between the ilustrados and the masses, much less, uncritically presuppose a homogeneity of perspectives, of theory and practice, among the ilustrados. What is needed is a "critical praxis hermeneutics" of the nineteenth century nationalist movement. Rather than re-viewing past events from contemporary perspectives (whether Marxist or otherwise), this article proposes to judge the *dramatis personae*, the social movements, and events of the nineteenth century in the light of the cultural milieu of the period—the *Volksgeist*, the standards and values of the people during that time. This is the critical interpretive (hermeneutic) question.

As a theoretical handle to this interpretive task of analyzing the problem of the nationalist past, specifically, the question of Rizal and the masses in the Philippine Revolution framed within the politics of decolonization, we rely on the Gramscian concept of hegemony.

The term hegemony recurs in a multitude of contexts throughout Gramsci's Prison Notebooks. However, as observed by T. J. Jackson Lears (1985), the one that comes closest to a definition is Gramsci's (1971, 12) oft-quoted characterization of hegemony as:

the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.

Lately, Florencia Mallon (1995, 6) has extended the concept into "two distinct, though sometimes related, ways": hegemony as process and hegemony as outcome. Mallon writes:

First, hegemony is a set of nested, continuous processes through which power and meaning are contested, legitimated, and redefined at all levels of society. . . . Second, hegemony is an actual end point, the result of hegemonic processes. An always dynamic or precarious balance, a contract or agreement, is reached among contesting forces. Because hegemonic processes have contributed to the emergence of a common social and moral project that includes popular as well as elite notions of political culture, those in power are then able to rule through a combination of coercion and consent.

The argument is two-fold: first, that the nineteenth century nationalist project became hegemonic, albeit briefly, in that it developed, in the Gramscian sense, into a national-popular will,<sup>1</sup> and second, that a key figure in the construction of this nationalist project was Jose Rizal who had the singular distinction of both articulating, through his literary and political work, the nationalist ideology, and of becoming, through his martyrdom, the national symbol that embodied the national-popular will. Indeed, Rizal's project—largely through the efforts of Bonifacio and the Katipunan—became the nationalist project that culminated in the revolution of 1896.

This thesis, of course, runs counter to the Agoncillo/Constantino perspective on the nineteenth century Philippine nationalist movement. Thus, a project seeking to reconstruct the nationalist past must presuppose a critique of this deeply-entrenched perspective. Such a critique is a necessary first step towards recovering the revolutionary tradition of the late nineteenth century nationalist movement, which Agoncillo and Constantino unwittingly obscured.

### **Sources for a Critical Hermeneutics**

A critical hermeneutics of the nineteenth century nationalist movement—one that explores the popular imagination in the Philippine Revolution—makes possible a radical reading of Rizal. This reading requires a critical approach that builds upon the perceptive but largely ignored (thanks to the dominance of the Agoncillo-Constantino perspective) scholarship of, among others, Cesar Majul, John Schumacher, Zeus Salazar, Setsuho Ikehata, Austin Coates, and Leon Ma. Guerrero.

We begin by relating all the relevant facts—Rizal's works and political acts, his correspondence with his countrymen and family, testimonies and diaries of people who knew him personally, around

the trajectory of Rizal's life-history, which can be periodized, in terms of pivotal events, as follows:

1861-1882: Formative years—Calamba, Bifan, Ateneo and the Jesuits, GOMBURZA Martyrdom, imprisonment of Teodora Alonzo, literary ventures, encounter with the guardia civil.

1882-1887: European sojourn, Enlightenment education, medical studies, patriotism, *Noli Me Tangere*.

1887-1888: The turning point—The Calamba Hacienda Case.

1888-1892: 2nd sojourn—radicalization of Rizal; historical, ethnological and linguistic studies, *Los Indios Bravos*, conflict within break with Del Pilar and *La Solidaridad*, *El Filibusterismo*.

1892-1896: The moment of truth—Rizal and the Revolution. *La Liga Filipina* and the Katipunan, exile to Dapitan, arrest and martyrdom.

These periods, and certain key events, in particular the crucial and pivotal Calamba incident, are taken as the contexts for reading all the relevant texts (correspondence, memoirs, political and historical pamphlets, and literary works such as poems and novels). Through this critical method, we shall interpret Rizal's political stand vis-à-vis separatism and the revolution.

A critical examination of Rizal's correspondence (ca. 1887-1892) provides incontrovertible evidence for a subversive Rizal. Unlike del Pilar (for whom the root problem was not Spain, but the interference of the friars), Rizal, during his second sojourn in Europe, had completely lost faith in the colonial government and had given up hope on the campaign for reforms—a far cry from the Rizal image that both the American colonizers and Constantino had constructed and propagated.

These letters shed light on the three critical issues and events that defined Rizal's politics in the anti-colonial struggle: the question of strategy and tactics (reform or revolution?), the Calamba Hacienda case; and Rizal's break with Del Pilar's *La Solidaridad*.

### **Separatism, Strategy and Tactics: Reform or Revolution?**

It should be emphasized that as early as 1887, even before the Calamba incident, Rizal had expressed the view that independence

through peaceful struggle is nothing but a dream and that seeking assimilation to Spain was a mistake, in two letters to Blumentritt:

21 February 1887

The Filipinos had long wished for Hispanization and they were wrong in aspiring for it. It is Spain and not the Philippines who ought to wish for the assimilation of the country (*Rizal-Blumentritt*, 52).<sup>2</sup>

26 January 1887

A peaceful struggle shall always be a dream, for Spain will never learn the lesson of her South American colonies. Spain cannot learn what England and the United States have learned. But, under the present circumstances, we do not want separation from Spain. All that we ask is greater attention, better education, better government [officials], one or two representatives [in parliament], and greater security for persons and our properties. Spain could always win the appreciation of Filipinos if she were only reasonable. But, *quos vult perdere Jupiter, prius dementat!* (44).

Constantino (1969, 14) and an American author, Ruth Roland (1969, 58-59), have misquoted Rizal's 26 January 1887 letter (cited above), cunningly omitting the first sentence—"A peaceful struggle will always be a dream, for Spain will never learn"—and the crucial word "But" [*Aber* in the German original] in—"But, under the present circumstances we do not want separation"—to prove that Rizal was an assimilationist. Constantino and Roland had also omitted the very important Latin line—*quos vult perdere Jupiter, prius dementat* [whom Jupiter would destroy, He first makes mad] which emphasizes Rizal's misgivings about Spain coming to a reasonable settlement with the Filipino reformists. Such unreasonableness, of course, is madness because it will lead to an unintended consequence: revolution. But maybe, as Rizal fears, that is Jupiter's way of destroying the Spanish colonial empire—by first making her insane, i.e., impervious to the reasonable demands of the reformists. Rizal's invoking of Jupiter seems to echo Hegel's reference to the "cunning of History."

Austin Coates (1968) perceives in the Latin quotation, especially when viewed together with Rizal's pseudonym, *La'ong-la'an* [Ever Prepared], an "almost fatalistic attitude" towards the historical process. Spain would never accede to the demand for reforms, and so, if the revolution was going to happen, it was going to happen. One must, therefore, be prepared for any eventuality. Rizal certainly never precluded the use of force, if it became necessary, as his 19 June 1887



letter to Blumentritt (written shortly before leaving Europe for the Philippines) reveals:

I can assure you that I have no desire to take part in conspiracies which seem to me premature and risky in the extreme. But if the government drives us to it, that is to say, when there remains to us no other hope than to seek our ruin in war, when the Filipinos shall prefer to die rather than to endure their miseries any longer, then I too shall advocate violent means. It is Spain who must choose between peace and ruin. . . . I cannot believe that you, as a free man, as a citizen of Europe, would like to advise your good friend to endure all and to act like a cowardly man, without courage (Guerrero 1963, 286).

We need not go all the way with Coates' "fatalistic" line of interpretation, to realize that Rizal, in the letter with the Latin quotation, was describing to Blumentritt a political tactic—seeking reforms like better education, representation in the Spanish Cortes, better government, etc., that needs to be distinguished from the longer strategy of separatism. Viewed in this sense, the campaign for reform and the struggle for independence are not mutually exclusive. The first was but a tactic in a broader strategy. Rizal had been consistent with this perspective, judging from his correspondence from 1887 to 1892. He certainly did not have illusions about the Reform Movement, though he appreciated its tactical value, given the circumstances, as his letter to Del Pilar makes clear:

April 1890

I am assiduously studying the events in our country. I believe that only intelligence can redeem us, in the material and in the spiritual. I still persist in this belief. Parliamentary representation will be a burden on the Philippines for a long time. If our countrymen felt otherwise than they do, we should reject any offer of such representation but, the way we are, with our countrymen indifferent, representation is good. It is better to be tied by the ankles than elbow to elbow. What can we do! (Guerrero 1963, 287).

The more radical expatriates in Madrid were of the same mind as far as tactics and strategy were concerned. After Rizal's break with Del Pilar and his La Solidaridad staff, Antonio Luna expressed his support for Rizal and sent him this letter:

January 1892

The propaganda for assimilation is necessary but separatist propaganda should be even more active for the practical thing is to seek adherents

in shaking off the yoke [of Spain entirely] since we should not obtain [assimilation] and even if we did (which is almost impossible) we would work for independence, banding together, making ourselves into apostles to gain men and money. For all this much study, a great deal of tact and prudence and no boasting of our strength, will be required. . . . I think you understand me well enough. . . . I shall go, then, to Manila and in all my acts keep ever in mind my duty as a separatist. . . . You already have then (if these are your own ideas) a follower around here who will work with constancy (Guerrero 1963, 309).

What militates against a more fruitful reading of Rizal, is the predilection of the contemporary mind, as exemplified by the otherwise impressive polemical essays of Agoncillo and Constantino, to dichotomize between Reform and Revolution, assuming these to be mutually exclusive. But this is not how the Filipinos viewed the world in the nineteenth century. Filipinos during Rizal's time did not, as Agoncillo and Constantino do, dichotomize between the peaceful campaign and the struggle for independence. Rizal and his separatist faction (which included, among others, Antonio Luna, Edilberto Evangelista, Galicano Apacible, Jose Alejandrino) had considered the peaceful campaign for reforms as one tactic within the broad, long-term strategy of separatism. Thus, Apacible writes of his talks with Rizal:

From our first conversations I also gathered that the political campaign we were then waging in the metropolis was not bad, rather it was even suitable to justify our attitude when the day would come to work for our separation. Moreover, it was good propaganda in the Philippines so that our countrymen would realize that all our petitions and peaceful campaign to obtain freedom had reached their limit and had been futile (Alzona 1971, 233-34).

In Rizal's circle, there was no question about the ultimate goal— independence. What needed to be worked out was the method of achieving nationhood. Of crucial importance was the enlightenment of the people (Paolo Freire's *conscientization*) and the development of a national consciousness. Therefore, the propaganda campaign, for as long as it contributed to this goal, was useful. But what differentiated Rizal's group from Del Pilar's is the latter's conviction that the sole obstacle to reform was the friars, i.e., the root of the problem was friar obscurantism.<sup>3</sup> The policy of Del Pilar's group, thus, was to work for the expulsion of the friars. With the friars out of the

way, or at least exposed and neutralized through a vigorous media campaign in Spain (called the Propaganda Movement), the reformists believed that they would then be able to lobby the Spanish government for democratic reforms. The key plank in this strategy is assimilation. For once the Philippines is incorporated as a province of Spain, the Filipinos will become Spanish citizens, and as such, will enjoy equal protection under the Constitution. Herein lies Rizal's major disagreement. For Rizal had come to realize that the root problem was Spanish colonialism itself. Once this became clear to Rizal, he began to insist that rather than trying to convince the Spaniards, who were not inclined to listen anyway, the ilustrados should address the Filipinos in the Philippines, and work for their enlightenment there. The only reason for going to Europe was to obtain the knowledge that, because of friar obscurantism and government repression, was not available in the Philippines. But once this knowledge had been acquired, the ilustrado must come home and work among his people. Thus, when Del Pilar arrived in Spain in 1889, Rizal who had preceded Del Pilar by one year, and who was unaware of Del Pilar's reason for coming to Europe,<sup>4</sup> wrote of his misgivings to Jose Ma. Basa (then in exile in Hong Kong):<sup>5</sup>

January 1889

Two friends have arrived here—Marcelo H. del Pilar and another from Sta. Ana. I welcome them; nevertheless they could serve the country more if they were in the Philippines. To serve our country, there is nothing like staying in it. It is there that we have to educate the people; it is there that we have to work. It is all right for young men to come here to study but those who have already finished their studies ought to return and live there. Marcelo H. del Pilar has already finished his studies, and he had no need to come to Europe (*Rizal-fellow reformists*, 264).

From these lines, we can see the beginning of the Rizal-Del Pilar conflict which eventually exploded into a major crisis in the Filipino community in Spain.

In the *Noli Me Tangere* (written during his first sojourn in Europe), and prior to 1887, Rizal, like his fellow expatriates, had made a clear distinction between the Spanish government and the religious orders, still holding hope for reforms from an enlightened government (Ikehata 1989, 91). But three major events that occurred after the *Noli*'s publication precipitated Rizal's turn to a more radical politics. The most crucial of these was the Calamba hacienda case, which began

shortly before Rizal's second departure for Europe (1888) and ended in 1891, with the eviction, arrest and deportation of many Calamba tenants, including members of Rizal's family. The other incident, a demonstration that got subdued as soon as it started, happened on 1 March 1888. It is considered by Coates (1968, 158) as "the first public outcome of the influence of the *Noli*," "an event of singular significance known as the Manifestation of 1888, when the *gobernadorcillos* of Manila (the appointed head of the city's wards) presented the Civil Governor with a petition demanding the expulsion of the friars from the Philippines." The government responded by declaring the petition subversive and arresting the petitioners, twenty-eight of whom were promptly jailed. When Rizal learned of how the Madrid Senate responded to this travesty of justice in the colony, he wrote bitterly to Blumentritt:

23 June 1888 (London)

I believe that it is already late; the majority of the Filipinos have already lost the hope they have pinned on Spain! Now, we await our fate from God and from ourselves, but never any more from any Government! (Rizal Blumentritt, 172).

This letter marks the hardening of Rizal's attitude towards Spain. Coates (1968, 159) notes, "If as he had posited before, Jupiter was indeed going to make Spain mad, it might soon be no longer appropriate to speak, as he once had [in 1884], of 'one nation, single in spirit.' It would be time to think in other terms."

The third incident happened the following year. From late March to early April 1889, another wave of arrests swept Manila, arising from the alleged discovery that Jose Maria Basa's brother, Matias, was an outlet for clandestine anti-friar propaganda (Schumacher 1973, 227). When he heard of the arrests, Rizal declared defiantly that such abuses will only serve to open the eyes of the people:

If the Filipinos in this cruel and unequal struggle demonstrate fortitude and valor in spite of everybody and everything, then it will be because they are worthy of freedom and then we can say: *Dumating na ang tadhana* [the day has come] (Letter to the members of the *La Solidaridad* Association, 2 April 1889. Rizal-fellow reformists, 313).

Some days later, Rizal reiterates his point, connecting the current struggle with the earlier movement of Burgos, which included Rizal's brother Paciano:

though we must regret this [wave of arrests] as a private misfortune, we must applaud it as a general good. Without 1872, there would not now be any Plaridel [del Pilar's pseudonym], or Jaena, or Sancianco, nor would the valiant and generous Filipino colonies in Europe exist; without 1872, Rizal would now be a Jesuit, and instead of writing the *Noli me tangere*, would have written the contrary. At the sight of those injustices and cruelties, though still a child, my imagination awoke, and I swore I would dedicate myself to avenge one day so many victims, and with this idea I have gone on studying, and this can be read in all my works and writings. God will one day grant me the opportunity to fulfill my promise. Good! Let them commit abuses, let there be arrests, exiles, executions, good! Let Destiny be fulfilled! The day on which they inflict martyrdom on our innocent families for our fault, farewell, pro-friar government, and perhaps, farewell, Spanish Government! (letter to Mariano Ponce, 18 April 1889. Schumacher 1973, 227-28).

The Manifestation of 1888, the waves of arrests in 1888 and 1889, and the Calamba hacienda case confirmed Rizal's worst fears—expressed as early as 1887—that relying on the Spanish government and campaigning for assimilation were a mistake. As the Calamba tragedy was unfolding, Rizal would find himself moving away from Del Pilar's assimilationist program. After his break with La Solidaridad, Rizal returned to the Philippines to start a more militant, more consciously, as its name indicates, nationalist movement, La Liga Filipina.

### The Calamba Hacienda Case

Ownership of the Calamba hacienda passed on to the Dominicans after the Jesuits, who originally owned it, were expelled in 1768. Thus, all the farmers in Calamba, like the Rizals, leased the lands they cultivated from the Dominican friars, who had been exacting, since 1833, a land rent, called the *canon*, as well as other sorts of fees on the land. These land taxes and fees became the source of tensions between the friars and their tenants. Irritants had been going on for some time—the non-issuance of receipts by the friar administrators; taxes increasing year after year, even during bad harvests or times of low prices; arbitrary and irregular fees; occasional evictions due to arrears in payment of taxes; etc. But they started becoming more serious in the 1880s, when the worldwide price of sugar dipped, and while Rizal was pursuing his medical studies in Madrid. Rizal was kept abreast of developments in Calamba through letters from his

relatives. For example, his brother-in-law, Mariano Herbosa, wrote to him in 29 August 1886 complaining of the innumerable vexations that tenants suffered under the friars: tax for irrigated rice-land "even if it has no water"; another tax for dry land (planted to sugar, maize, etc.); "the tax on *palay* (unhusked rice) is separate from the tax on maize, mongo, or garlic"; arbitrary increases in taxes ("There is no limit to this tax, for they fix it themselves"), etc. (*Rizal-family*, 240). Thus, by the time Rizal came home in mid-1887, he was well aware of his townmates's difficulties and the smoldering tensions, which exploded during his stay.

He had not anticipated it, but Rizal soon became the center of the tenants' struggle against the Dominicans. It started so innocently. On 30 December 1887, the Government, puzzled why the revenue paid by the Dominican Order had remained constant despite the ever increasing size of the cultivated land owned by it, formally asked the Calamba town council to determine whether there had been any increase in the products and size of the Dominican estate over the past three years. Rizal was requested by the town council to draft the report. He gladly obliged, but required his townmates to supply him with all the relevant facts about the estate from its very beginnings.

What came out was a horror story of Dominican corruption and financial deceit on a massive scale. The original hacienda owned by the Jesuits consisted of only a small parcel of land, and included only a part of the town. But the Dominicans had claimed a much more extensive area, no less than the whole town and its surrounding fields. Yet they were paying the Government only the income tax due on the original smaller Jesuit hacienda. The report thus exposed two corporate frauds. The Dominicans were cheating the government of nine-tenths of the revenue that should have been derived from their estate and, at the same time, were regularly collecting an ever increasing amount of rent, taxes and fees on land that they in fact did not own or had acquired by means of coercive and deceitful land-grabbing, as dramatized in the case of Cablesang Tales of *El Filibusterismo*. Rizal, therefore, advised his family not to pay rent anymore. The rest of the Calamba tenants followed suit and petitioned, again through Rizal's encouragement, the Government to intervene by authorizing and supervising the drawing-up of a new contract between the people of Calamba and the Dominican landowners.<sup>6</sup>

The Dominican corporation responded by filing an action for eviction against the Calamba tenants. But far from intimidating the

Calamba townsfolk into submission, as had been the case in the past, the Dominican reaction galvanized them into a united front in defense of their rights. It was the first time, notes Coates (1968, 167), that a whole town in the Philippines resisted the powers that be. After Rizal left again for Europe (he did not want to, but he was urged by his family and townmates to leave, for his and their own safety), it fell upon Paciano and his brothers-in-law, "to advise and lead a struggle which, in view of the power against which it was pitted, was desperate and almost certainly hopeless" (167). When the Justice of the peace court of Calamba ruled in favor of the tenants, the Dominicans brought the case to the Supreme Court in Manila, which immediately decided in the Dominicans' favor. The Calamba tenants and the Rizal family, thus, had no recourse but to appeal their case to the Supreme Court in Madrid. Unfortunately, when the conservative General Valeriano Weyler became the new Governor-General in May 1888 (replacing the liberal General Terrero), he cast his lot completely with the Dominicans. One of his first acts was to enforce the court ruling for the eviction of the tenants. The first to fall was the Rizal family.

This standard account comes from the Rizal biographies by Coates (1968) and by Guerrero (1963). It does not, however, give us a glimpse of the political motivations of the Rizal family in spearheading the struggle against the Dominican corporation. A very revealing insider's account of how Rizal and his family thought and felt about the Calamba hacienda case is given by their legal defender, Felipe Buencamino, a highly reputed lawyer in Manila. Buencamino writes in his memoir (*Sixty Years of Philippine History*)<sup>7</sup> that he decided to remove himself as the legal counsel for the Rizal family when he realized that Rizal had a more radical agenda in resisting the Dominicans, who after all were willing to come to a settlement, but only with the ring-leaders, namely, the Rizals.

Buencamino relates that he took over the case from the Rizals' original lawyer, Don Ambrosio Rianzares Bautista, who backed out for fear of being denounced by the Dominican friars. Notwithstanding what he was up against, Buencamino accepted the case, assured by his friendship with all the magistrates of the Royal Audiencia of Manila and with the Marquis of Ahumada, *general segundo cabo* [the immediate head of the army and second in command to the captain general and governor] of the Philippines at that time. As the Rizal family's lawyer, Buencamino immediately discerned Rizal's agenda:

Dr. Rizal then conceived the first noble political thought of open hostility to the clerical system of government that reigned in the country. He advised his own parents as tenants of the Calamba estate not to pay the friars' canon under the principle of their not being owners of the estate. Following this action of Rizal's parents refusing to pay canon, the friars sued them for ejectment. But what was behind Dr. Rizal's idea was that he thought that the action of his parents would be seconded by all or at least by the majority of the tenants not only of the Calamba estate, but also of the neighboring friars' estates in the towns of Santa Rosa, Biñan, San Pedro Tunasan, Muntinlupa, Imus, Tanza, and San Francisco de Malabon with their about 70,000 inhabitants. Dr. Rizal thought that the thousands of tenants sued by the friars would call the attention of the government towards the friars' abuses of usury and despoliation (1969, 14).

Subsequent to the default of Rizal's parents, notes Buencamino, almost all the tenants of Calamba followed suit. This worried the government, which feared that the large number of defendants posed a threat to public order in the town of Calamba, or perhaps more accurately, as Noam Chomsky would say, it posed the "threat of a good example," and, therefore, needed to be utterly destroyed. But before resorting to force, the Dominicans tried to co-opt the Rizals and, thereby, put a wedge in the unity of the people of Calamba. Buencamino confides that, through the mediation and favorable intervention of his connections, Don Francisco Iriarte and Don Vicente Reyes, judge and governor of the province respectively, he was able to obtain from the Dominican fathers the following arrangement:

1. The Dominican fathers as owners of the Calamba estate ceded the ownership of all lands comprising the area of the poblacion of Calamba which involved about 100 quifiones [one quifion = two hectares, 79 acres, and 50 centiares] valued at P 1,000 per quifion;
2. Accounts for rentals in arrears were all remitted;
3. In exchange, the accused [i.e., the Rizals] acknowledge the ownership by the Dominicans of the rest of the quifiones of the estate, and would pay only ten percent of the canon in succeeding years (14-15).

This proposed settlement, however, did not bring the case to a happy ending. The Rizal family had rejected it as a matter of principle. Buencamino narrates in his memoir:

This arrangement was made in 1890, but Dr. Rizal on being consulted on it by his family, disapproved in a cablegram such arrangement, which led me to think that he had never considered the case from a



private point of view, but from the political point of view. In other words, he was pushing the Filipino people to the brink of a revolution through the simple act of the tenants' refusing to pay the friars' canon for their supposed estate which, to Dr. Rizal, were all plundered in the manner he described the plunder of these estates in his famous politico-social book *El Filibusterismo*.

I told therefore Dr. Rizal's family that I could not under any manner continue their defense because it would be useless for the object that Dr. Rizal proposed (15).

Inevitably, the Rizals suffered persecution. The first to fall was Rizal's brother-in-law Manuel Hidalgo, a former law student and erstwhile substitute justice of the peace. Hidalgo was banished to Bohol "without due process of law" (*Rizal-Blumentritt*, 205-6). Towards the end of May 1890, the *Real Audiencia* [Supreme Court] of Manila passed judgement in favor of the Dominicans, declaring the Calamba tenants as illegal occupants of their land. On 6 September 1890, General Weyler (the notorious "butcher of Cuba" during the Cuban revolution of 1896) began enforcing the will of the Dominican friars—"sending artillery and military forces to Calamba which started to demolish the house of Rizal's parents, whom they arrested with his brothers-in-law, brother and sisters, exiling the men to different places of the archipelago" (Buencamino 1969, 15). On that first day of friar-directed evictions, sixty families were thrown out, and in addition, their sugar mills and any other buildings they had erected were destroyed (Coates 1968, 167).

It was a disaster for the Calamba farming community. Recounting the incident to Blumentritt, Rizal wrote:

31 January 1892

It is horrible to describe the dreadful happenings that my family has witnessed in Kalamba—sick persons thrown out of their houses; entire families had to pass the night outdoors; the Dominicans forbade the rest of the townspeople to give the unfortunates lodging and hospitality. Terrified, some saw how their houses were being destroyed and burned down by the government soldiers, some of whom refused to do it! (*Rizal-Blumentritt*, 434).

The community was ripped asunder. By the end of September 1890, 400 tenants had been evicted, twenty-five of them deported to the remotest, most desolate areas of the archipelago (Ikehata 1989, 84). To compound matters, this happened in the wake of devastat-

ing cholera epidemics in 1888 and 1889! (J. P. Bantug 1952). Two years later, Rizal could still not get over it. He wrote to Blumentritt:

30 April 1892

Whenever I hear the sad story of the poor peasants whom the Dominicans despoiled of all that they had—their houses, their rice, their household utensils—leaving the mothers and children to cry and wail for the despoliation of their only belongings; when I think of a poor woman named Estanislawa, who, sick as she was, with four small children and the husband absent, had to fight with a friar, the soldiers, and a Spaniard, and as a result of this had to stay in bed four days, and her whole body was mangled for defending her house and the rice for her children . . . oh, I despair! (*Rizal-Blumentritt*, 442).

The parents of Rizal, who refused to vacate their home, were bodily carried out, their furniture and valuables thrown out of their house. Henceforth they would live in Binondo, Manila, not far from where Andres Bonifacio lived. When Bonifacio formed the Katipunan after Rizal's arrest and deportation in 1892, two of Rizal's sisters became members of the Katipunan's women's auxiliary.<sup>8</sup> See the account of Rizal's grandniece, Asuncion Lopez Bantug, *Lolo Jose; An Intimate Portrait of Rizal* (1982, 196, 199). The houses of those singled out as ringleaders were destroyed, many burned to the ground. The head of the Rizal family, the seventy-eight-year old Don Francisco, together with his eldest son, Paciano, and sons-in-law, Silvestre Ubaldo and Antonio Lopez, were deported to the island of Mindoro. What they did to Rizal's mother was worse, as Rizal himself recounts to Blumentritt—

30 December 1891

They sent her from Manila to Sta. Cruz in La Laguna by mountain road, going from town to town, because she did not identify herself as Realonda de Rizal but simply as Teodora Alonzo! But she has always and always called herself Teodora Alonzo! Imagine an old woman of more than sixty-four, going up and down mountain roads with her daughter, guarded by constables! She asked to be allowed to travel by steamship, offering to pay everything, even the constables' fares, but the noble and Spanish 'gentlemen' did not allow it! (Guerrero 1963, 298).

While this carnage was going on, Rizal was in Madrid, armed with a power of attorney from Paciano, lobbying in behalf of the unfortunate tenants, and representing his family in their final appeal to the

*Tribunal Supremo*. Alas, it would be all in vain. The highest judicial court in Spain upheld the earlier decision of the Supreme Court of Manila, thus, legitimizing Governor-General Weyler's infamy.

Rizal's disillusionment with Spain was complete. How he felt at this point in time can be glimpsed from the novel he was finishing. In *El Filibusterismo*, the angry author vowed justice for the Calamba victims—ending his chapter on Cablesang Tales (a victim of land-grabbing who sought vengeance by murdering a friar and then becoming a dangerous bandit) by interjecting himself in these words:

Do not be alarmed, peaceful citizens of Kalamba! None of you is called Tales, none of you committed the crime! You are called Luis Habana, Matias Belarmino, Nicasio Eigasani, Cayetano de Jesus, Mateo Elejorde, Leandro Lopez, Antonio Lopez, Silvestre Ubaldo, Manuel Hidalgo, Paciano Mercado—you are the whole town of Kalamba! You have cleared your fields, you have spent on them the labors of a lifetime, savings, sleepless nights, privations, and you have been stripped of all, driven out of your homes, deprived by order even of the hospitality of others. They were not content with doing violence to justice; they broke the most sacred traditions of our country. You have served Spain and the King and, when you asked for justice in their names, you were exiled without trial and torn from the arms of your wives and the kisses of your children. Any one of you has suffered more than Kablesang Tales and yet none of you, not one has taken the law in his own hands. There was neither pity nor human feeling for you, and like Mariano Herbosa you have been persecuted beyond the grave. Weep or laugh in the solitary islands where you wander, idle and uncertain of the future. Spain, generous Spain, watches over you, and sooner or later you shall have justice! (Guerrero translation 1962, 70).

As long as Rizal remained in Europe, the specter of Calamba would haunt him. For Rizal, there was only one way to exorcise the ghost—to come home and face the monster. He expressed himself thus in a letter to Mariano Ponce:

July 1890

I am thinking of returning [to the Philippines] as soon as possible, and let God say what is to happen. Graciano should do the same; instead of going to Cuba to catch the yellow fever, he should go to the Philippines and let himself be killed in support of his ideas. . . . If one must die, let one die at least in his country, for his country and in the name of his country (Guerrero 1963, 288–89).

The consequences of the Calamba hacienda case were momentous. Indeed one can argue that this blatant travesty of justice, perpetrated by both Church and State, precipitated a more militant separatist movement in the Philippines. After the Calamba incident, financial support from the Philippines for *La Solidaridad* began to wane. This, plus Rizal's withdrawal from Del Pilar's assimilationist campaign, spelled the decline of the Propaganda Movement in Madrid. Soon thereafter, the people turned their hopes "to another direction," first to Rizal's *La Liga Filipina*, and then, after Rizal's arrest and deportation, and as Rizal himself had predicted, to Bonifacio's Katipunan.

### Rizal's Break with Del Pilar

The Calamba tragedy forged Rizal's turn to a more radical separatist stance, an ideological position that he fully nurtured in the second phase of his political career: 1888-1892. A study of Rizal's life during his second sojourn in Europe reveals his increasingly separatist proclivities. This can be gleaned not only from his writings (*Sobre la indolencia de los Filipinos*, *Filipinas dentro de cien años*, *El Filibusterismo*, etc.) and political activities (organizing the *Los Indios Bravos* and the International Congress of Philippinists, and most importantly, founding the *La Liga Filipina*) but also from his correspondence and eventual strained relations with the Propaganda circle in Madrid, in particular with Marcelo H. del Pilar and Eduardo de Lete.

As long as Rizal stayed away from the Filipino circle in Madrid, a fruitful collaboration between him and Del Pilar could be sustained, notwithstanding the ideological differences between them. Because of his stature among the Filipino expatriates, Rizal was made Honorary President of the *La Solidaridad* association (whose journal carried the same name) in January 1889. But mindful of the need for unity among the Filipinos, Rizal took a self-effacing stance in relation to Del Pilar. By 1890, as Rizal began to move towards a more separatist direction, he expressed his wish that Del Pilar assume full reign in directing the journal.<sup>9</sup> Though still willing to contribute occasional articles to *La Solidaridad*, Rizal made clear his dissociation from its assimilationist political objectives, such as parliamentary representation, in his 4 April 1890 letter to Del Pilar, whose articles appeared in *La Solidaridad* without his by-line:

It would please me if you were always to sign your name [in *La Solidaridad*] for I want to be overshadowed gradually; what I want is for you to take my place, you and nobody else... If we obtain a seat in the Cortes [the Spanish parliament], I shall withdraw and dedicate myself to teaching. I could not accept a seat [in the Cortes] although my ancestors on my mother's side were Congressmen (Jose Florentino and Lorenzo Alberto).<sup>10</sup> I am no longer interested in those things. My desire is, therefore, that you should prepare yourself in case we should obtain it (Guerrero 1963, 267).

But when Rizal returned to Madrid to prosecute the Calamba case before the Tribunal Supremo, he found himself getting deeply involved with the affairs of the Filipino colony, trying to mold it on the basis of his political and moral principles. This inevitably brought him into a confrontation with Del Pilar, who, as editor of *La Solidaridad*, had been the *de facto* leader of the Filipino association. The conflict came to a head when it was proposed that the Filipino colony be organized under a single leader, a proposal that Rizal seized as an opportunity to set the direction he believed Filipino policy ought to take, given his "basic disagreements with the methods used by del Pilar; indeed with the whole idea of Del Pilar and his *delegacion*" (Schumacher 1973, 226). The Filipino community thus had to choose between Rizal and Del Pilar. But the voting resulted in three inconclusive ballots. To avert a crisis of leadership, Mariano Ponce pulled some strings with Del Pilar's faction, and Rizal was finally elected. But the prolonged voting and the haggling that ensued had made it clear to the chagrined Rizal that he did not wield a moral and ideological influence on the majority, and that the Filipino colony was irreparably polarized between his faction and Del Pilar's. Thus, unable to build a consensus around his political program, and realizing the need for a new, more vigorous movement in the Philippines, Rizal walked out of the Filipino colony for good.

The exchanges that followed, in which Del Pilar, fearing the repercussions of a break with Rizal, e.g., withdrawal of funding from Manila ilustrados sympathetic to Rizal, was apologetic and conciliatory, confirm that the major reason for the parting of ways between Del Pilar and Rizal was ideological. We quote some of Rizal's replies to Del Pilar:

12 August 1891

If I stopped writing for the *Soli* it was for a number of reasons: 1) I need time to work on my book (the *Fili*), 2) I wanted other Filipinos

to work too, 3) in my opinion unity in action is worth a lot for the party and, since you are on top and I have my own ideas, it is better to leave you to direct policy as you see fit and for me not to meddle (Guerrero 1963, 268-69).

7 October 1891

Not only ideas but whole articles have been printed in the *Soli* which are against my opinions and convictions and I cannot make the fortnightly inconsistent. I prefer to enclose myself in solitude and retirement rather than disturb the peace and harmony of the staff.

I have made up my mind how I should act, and that is to leave the Filipinos in Madrid to direct policy, they know and understand it so well (Guerrero 1963, 269).

The ideological conflict between Rizal and del Pilar extended to the rest of the Filipinos in Madrid, between what Coates called the "hard core" of younger, more progressive men who gravitated towards Rizal, and the older men that Galicano Apacible, a Rizal supporter, described as "cautious and less radical" (cited in Coates 1968, 189). Edilberto Evangelista confirms this observation in his letter of support to Rizal, referring to Del Pilar's faction as an "effete generation" saddled with "conservative ideas":

31 March 1892

How distressed I am to learn from your letter that over there you are surrounded by opposition which prevents you from carrying out your ideas, instead of finding around you the solid support of those who seem to love their native land . . . this effete generation that precedes us and which ought to pass away soon, still wants to leave us this dismal legacy of slavery. It is because their ideas of patriotism and liberty are not clear, being influenced by the abominable consideration of interest and family. . . . Now, it only remains for us to prevent that such conservative ideas which are never patriotic, spread among the youth and the next generation, for otherwise the salvation of our native land would become an insoluble problem (*Rizal-fellow reformists*, 667-68).

By late 1891, Rizal had burned his bridges to the Madrid reformists. A surviving fragment of a letter, dated October 1891 and signed *La'ong La'an* [Ever Prepared]:

If our countrymen hope in us here in Europe, they are certainly mistaken. . . . The help we can give them is our lives in our own coun-

try. The error all make in thinking we can help here, far away, is a great mistake indeed. The medicine must be brought near to the sick man. Had I not been unwilling to shorten the lives of my parents, I would not have left the Philippines, no matter what happened. Those five months I stayed there were a model life, a book even better than the *Noli me tangere*. The field of battle is the Philippines; there is where we should be (Schumacher 1973, 233).

After abandoning the Propaganda Movement in Madrid, Rizal settled down temporarily in Hongkong, where he was joined by his parents, brother and sisters. In this happy setting, Rizal embarked on a lucrative medical practice, which was enough to enable his family to live in comfort. During this time, a budding nationalist who would play a major role in the destiny of China, Sun Yat Sen, was a medical student at the Hongkong College of Medicine. Yat Sen's professor, the radical Dr. Marquez, was Rizal's close friend and neighbor (Coates 1963, Chapter 1 of Part V, "Hongkong—The Spanish Doctor"). But the idyll in Hong Kong would not last long. The Philippines beckoned irresistibly to Rizal. Foremost in his mind was the urgency of beginning a new struggle. Thus, Rizal resisted all efforts by Blumentritt, del Pilar and others to get him to write once more for *La Solidaridad* (Schumacher 1973, 232). In his letters to Blumentritt, Rizal expressed himself unequivocally:

30 December 1891

*La Solidaridad* is no longer the place to give battle; this is a new fight. I should like to follow your wishes, but I believe that it will all be in vain; the fight is no longer in Madrid. It is all a waste of time (Guerrero 1963, 298).

31 January 1892

I have lost hope in Spain. For that reason, I shall not write one more word for *La Solidaridad*. It seems to me it is in vain. All of us are *voce clamantis in deserto dum omnes rapiunt* (Rizal-Blumentritt, 434).<sup>11</sup>

23 February 1892

What did we obtain from the campaigns of *La Solidaridad*, except Weylerisms, the Law on Banditry and the tragedy of Kalamba? It seems to me to parley with the government is only a waste of time (Guerrero 1963, 313).

While in Hongkong, Rizal considered all his options and planned his next moves, one of which included establishing a Filipino colony

in Sandakan, North Borneo, where the evicted farmers of Calamba could resettle. This however did not materialize. Governor-General Despujol disapproved of the project. Consequently, Rizal concentrated on his foremost objective: returning to the Philippines to establish *La Liga Filipina*, which would pave the way for the formation of a Filipino national community, and therefore, national independence. Rizal was convinced that, however Spain responded to the new initiative, independence was inevitable. It was simply a question of how it would come, peacefully or through a revolution. It was therefore time to come to grips with the reality of revolution. As Coates (1968, 218) notes, "He had been considering revolution in some detail for more than a year. He had discussed it with Galicano Apacible in Madrid, with Jose Alejandrino in Ghent, and now with Paciano and Basa in Hongkong."

The radical buzz in Hongkong must have reached Blumentritt, judging from his letter of caution to Rizal (dated 30 January 1892), entreating him "not to meddle in revolutionary agitations. Because one who initiates a revolution ought at least to have the probability of success, if he does not wish to burden his conscience with useless bloodshed." Antonio Luna's and Edilberto Evangelista's letters to Rizal indicate that a new agenda was in the offing:

Antonio Luna, January 1892 [on the possibility of a new paper]

If it is to be like the *Soli*, there is no need for it. If it is revolutionary, then let it ask for independence, and this can be done anywhere, even in Hongkong. For this last purpose you can count on me as a contributor (Guerrero 1963, 307).

Evangelista, 29 April 1892 [on forming a revolutionary party]

Why don't you make an effort to find out how many share your ideas and are moved by the same impulses? I mean that your thoughts must take actual shape through the organization, in defiance of the Government, of a Revolutionary Club, which you could lead in Hongkong or any other place. . . . I am sure that the main, the only obstacle you would have to overcome in such an enterprise would be the opposition of our old men and our rich men who tremble at the thought of being threatened in their interests by the Government's reprisals (Guerrero 1963, 311).

But *La Solidaridad* refused to let go and continued to hound him. For his bold separatist stance, Rizal was satirized in the 15 April 1892 issue of Del Pilar's *La Solidaridad*, in an article written by the



assimilationist Eduardo de Lete. Entitled *Five-and-Ten-Cent Redeemers*, it was about a quixotic individual aptly named *Iluso I* who, as a mad man, was advocating independence for the unfortunate mythical city of *Villailusa* [The City of Illusion]. Though his name was not mentioned, Rizal was convinced that he was the one being satirized, for who else was openly questioning the policy of La Solidaridad and advocating separation from Spain? Who else indeed had openly disagreed with the policies set by Del Pilar?

Rizal responded to Lete's article with anger, not only because he felt it was uncalled for, but also, and more importantly, because he feared it would be counter-productive and detrimental to the Filipino cause. His 23 May 1892 letter of protest to Del Pilar is revealing of their political differences in goals and methods. We quote the pertinent parts:

What mad dog bit you that you should attack me when here [in Hongkong] I have nothing at all to do with politics and work only to prepare for the Filipinos a refuge of freedom [the Borneo (Sandakan) colony project], spending the rest of my time in writing a few things? Have I not told you that I was leaving politics to you so that you may gain a lot of prestige? Did you have to attack me for that? I cannot understand it at all. That is why I say to myself that if you have acted for political motives, I applaud you and want you to continue because it seems to me that you are on the right path. For the time being I am very much disliked by the friars; so, by getting rid of me, you can achieve much in the way of assimilation (Guerrero 1963, 293).

The split between Rizal and Del Pilar, as well as the horror of the Calamba incident, inevitably led to the demise of the Propaganda Movement in Spain. As to be expected, after Rizal withdrew from La Solidaridad, convinced that the only recourse was to come home and wage a more militant struggle, the bright lights of the paper such as Antonio Luna and Graciano Lopez-Jaena abandoned Del Pilar. Notwithstanding the dogged efforts of Del Pilar to keep it going, La Solidaridad eventually declined. Ilustrado financial backers in the Philippines withdrew their support out of disillusionment, after they had witnessed the Calamba military atrocities. Del Pilar, however, held on tenaciously until 1895, when the Comité de Propaganda in Manila, which had been sending the funds, bluntly told him, through Mabini, to close shop. Mabini wrote to Del Pilar, in no uncertain terms, that Filipinos have transferred their hopes "to another direction" and have lost any expectations for the magazine, to which Del

Pilar, at his wits end, replied with "uncontrollable rage and protestations" (Ikehata 1989, 97). There is an apocryphal story that in his deathbed, shortly before the outbreak of the revolution, Del Pilar finally embraced the separatist cause, his last words were reportedly: "Insurrection is the only solution." This, however, is disputed by his biographer, Lea Zapanta (1967; cited in Ikehata 1989, 80) who declares that there is no evidence whatsoever for this story.

A misunderstanding had arisen concerning the Rizal-Del Pilar conflict, in which, contrary to fact, Rizal was viewed as the assimilationist and Del Pilar the separatist. According to Coates (1968, 195, n.1), "Part of the reason for this misunderstanding is due to the fact that Del Pilar's relatives were prominent members of the Katipunan, and found themselves later in a position to assert that on the contrary it was their relative who was the progressive and Rizal the waverer. This was not how it was seen in 1891."

Coates' observation, seconded by Schumacher (1973), Ikehata (1989), Salazar (1983), and Corpuz (1989), is born out by Apacible's testimony. In a speech he delivered at the University of the Philippines during the observance of Rizal's birthday anniversary in 1935, the 71-year old erstwhile member of the Rizal faction recalled:

In the famous election that lasted three days held in Madrid by the Filipino colony to elect a *Responsable*, a Filipino who would direct and be responsible for the Philippine policy in Europe, there were two candidates: Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar. Many of us who supported Rizal's candidacy did so on the conviction that Rizal was a separatist and the more radical one (Alzona 1971, 236).

Thus, as the extant correspondence between Rizal and his colleagues demonstrate, and as subsequent developments would confirm, not only had Rizal long opted for independence, he had also strongly expressed the view that nothing much could be expected of any political activity in Spain, and had insisted that the Solidaridad should be directed to the Philippines because it was only there that it could achieve its objectives (Schumacher 1973, 226-27). The expatriate *ilustrados* would eventually heed Rizal's call some years later. Antonio Luna, Jose Alejandrino, Edilberto Evangelista, and many others returned to the Philippines to join the Revolution, subsequently distinguishing themselves as brilliant generals in Aguinaldo's revolutionary army. Through their participation in the revolutionary struggle—"How it takes place is not important . . . in combat or cruel

martyrdom, it is the same when what is asked of you is for your country and your home"—they tried to fulfill what Rizal had referred to as "our arduous mission which is the formation of the Filipino nation" (Rizal's 27 July 1888 letter to Mariano Ponce).

### Agoncillo and Constantino Nationalism

Having laid down the historical context for Rizal's separatist perspective, we can now clarify the theoretical confusions and historiographic errors of Agoncillo and Constantino. These flaws spring from a dichotomizing and essentializing mind-set which compulsively pits elite consciousness and politics against those of the masses/subalterns. This mind-set ultimately explains the failure of both Agoncillo and Constantino to understand the nature of Filipino nationalism, specifically, the hegemonic process in the forging of the nation.

Agoncillo's dichotomizing predilection leads him to construe the Liga and the Katipunan as politically and ideologically poles apart. This is simply not true. Though short-lived, the Liga's impact, both organizationally and ideologically, on Bonifacio's Katipunan was fundamental. The political platform of the Liga became, through the leadership of Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto, the ideological cornerstone of the Katipunan (Majul 1960; Guerrero 1963). In his annotations to Morga, Rizal set down three theses: 1) that the people of the Philippines had a flourishing culture before the coming of the Spaniards; 2) that the Filipinos were decimated, demoralized and ruined by Spanish colonialism; and 3) that the present state in the Philippines was not in all ways and necessarily superior to their past. These theses, developed further in *La Indolencia de los Filipinos* and *Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años*, became the basis for recruitment to the Katipunan. To be accepted as a full-pledged member, the recruit must answer correctly three questions: 1) What was the condition of the Philippines before the coming of the Spaniards? 2) What was the effect of Spanish colonization? 3) Wherein lies the future of the Philippines? To pass this initiation test, the recruit must answer in accordance with the theses laid down by Rizal.

Agoncillo also obscures the fact that the founding members of the Katipunan came from the Liga's ranks. The Katipunan has been represented by Agoncillo (1956, 1) as a "distinctively plebeian society." Agoncillo describes Bonifacio as "almost illiterate" and "belong[ing]

to the lowest class" (283-84). But was Bonifacio a plebeian, let alone illiterate? His father had served as Tondo's *teniente mayor* (vice mayor). His parents had enough means to send him to a private tutor in the locality (Manuel 1955, 253). As a young man, Bonifacio was literate enough in Spanish to be employed successively by two multinational firms then operating in Manila, Fleming & Co. and Fressel & Co., as an "agent" and "broker" (de los Santos 1973, 85). Bonifacio's wife, Gregoria de Jesus, was the daughter of a landed *gobernadorcillo* of Caloocan. Thus, Fast and Richardson (1979, 70) write that Bonifacio "occupied a position closer to the center of the social pyramid than to its base, closer to the petty-bourgeoisie than the proletariat." The same thing can be said of virtually all the founding members of the Katipunan (who were also founding members of the Liga). In fact, two of Katipunan's founding members were from rich families. Pio Valenzuela, the Secretary General of the Katipunan, obtained his *licentiate* in Medicine from the Universidad de Santo Tomas. His parents "belonged to the local aristocracy of Polo, Bulacan." Restituto Javier, another founding member, was the son of a Tondo property owner. Emilio Jacinto, "the Brains of the Katipunan," and Ladislao Diwa were both graduates of Colegio de San Juan de Letran and law students at the Universidad de Santo Tomas. Clearly, the leadership of the original Katipunan was not from the ranks of the "pobres y ignorantes." In the Magdiwang and Magdalo factions of the Katipunan in Cavite, the leadership was mostly from the landed local elite, *principales* and schoolteachers. This pattern is replicated in all the seven other provinces which figured in the Philippine revolution (Fast and Richardson 1979; Guerrero 1977; Ochoa 1989).

There is of course nothing extraordinary about this. Virtually all the nationalist movements and revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe and in the Americas, as well as the more contemporary liberation movements in the Third World were inspired and led by middle class intellectuals—what Constantino would call *ilustrados*. Of course many of the counter-revolutionaries also sprang from the ranks of the bourgeoisie. But this only goes to show that the bourgeoisie, as Schumacher (1991) has pointed out is not a homogenous class, either in wealth or political persuasion. The same thing can be said of their counterparts in the much earlier (1810) Mexican revolution—the *letrados* and *criollos* like Miguel Hidalgo and Ignacio Allende. Some *ilustrados* were extremely wealthy and belonged to the far right of the political spectrum among the Filipinos. This highly privileged native elite never advocated independence and

were the first to shift their allegiance to the United States when it became clear that the Revolution had been defeated. The first Filipino members of the Philippine Commission, which governed the Philippines after the American conquest, came from this wealthy and conservative sector—Jose Luzuriaga, Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, Benito Legarda—and so did the rest who filled the native slots in the American colonial bureaucracy. Others, though not as wealthy, had enough means to study in universities, locally or abroad, eventually becoming the country's first professionals (doctors, engineers, pharmacists, lawyers) and businessmen. These other ilustrados became active participants of the revolution, such as Generals Antonio Luna, Jose Alejandrino, Edilberto Evangelista, Mamerto Natividad, Miguel Malvar, Pio Valenzuela, Vicente Lukban, and of course, Rizal's brother, Paciano, etc. Who can accuse any of these ilustrados of being anti-revolutionary like their richer counterparts? Compare the fortunes of these two segments of the ilustrado and see how Constantino's misleading generalization arises from his gross abuse of the term.

Is Constantino's essentialist notion of the ilustrado as a class category meaningful at all? Apolinario Mabini was born poor and remained poor all his life, but he was the legal luminary in President Aguinaldo's cabinet, and a highly educated and intellectually sophisticated writer. Was he not an ilustrado? Emilio Aguinaldo, on the other hand, was from a *cacique* family, which played a prominent role in Cavite local politics. Emilio's father had served several times as town gobernadorcillo and he himself, like his brother Crispulo before him, had served as *capitan municipal* of his town. But Emilio Aguinaldo was a school drop-out, having failed his courses at Colegio de San Juan de Letran. His knowledge of Spanish was mediocre; thus, he had not even bothered to read Rizal's novels (as he himself later admitted). Was Aguinaldo an ilustrado? Schumacher (1991, 252, n.12) writes, "Though coming from a well-to-do landowning family, Aguinaldo spent three years unsuccessfully at San Juan de Letran College and with private tutors, yet never really learned Spanish well."<sup>12</sup> Bonifacio, "The Great Plebeian," in contrast, had read extensively, not only Rizal's writings, but also the histories of the American and French revolutions. On top of these, Bonifacio had the distinction of being the first Filipino to translate Rizal's *Mi Ultimo Adios* into the vernacular. Who among them was the ilustrado, the land-owning but semi-literate capitan municipal Aguinaldo, or the

poor lawyer and philosopher Mabini, or the self-educated poet/ware-houseman/sales-agent Bonifacio?

The tendency, deriving from a vulgar Marxism, to categorize the ilustrado as a homogenous class with a unitary ideology obscures more than it illuminates. Trapped in this hermeneutic straitjacket, one fails to discern, even on an empirical level, the pivotal personal experiences that could have had an impact on consciousness. The Rizal family suffered largely on account of Rizal's political commitment. Their land was confiscated, the whole family was evicted from their own house, and neighbors were forbidden to take them in so that they had to spend the night out in the cold. Rizal's father and brothers-in-law were banished to the hinterland of Mindoro island (and later became fugitives when they managed to escape during their transfer to the most remote islands from Manila, the Sulu archipelago), his mother, sixty-four years old and nearly blind, was arrested (for the second time, the first time was when Rizal was only ten years old) and made to walk for more than three days from Manila to the distant town of Sta. Cruz, Laguna province, to appear in a court trial.

This series of tragedies began in 1890 when Rizal was back in Europe. During Rizal's exile in Dapitan (1892-1896) the Spanish authorities, through the Dominican friars made one last attempt to co-opt him. In return for retracting his novels, he was offered a package deal that no self-serving ilustrado could ever refuse, consisting of the following: an estate (house and land), a professorial chair in the Universidad de Santo Thomas (at that time the state university), and 100,000 pesos—all of which Rizal rejected (Guerrero. 1963, 376; Quirino 1940, 260). By the time of his execution in 1896, the family fortune was gone. By that time also, Rizal's only brother, Paciano, had joined the Revolution and had, by 1898, as a General of the Revolutionary army, liberated the entire Laguna province, including the town of Calamba.

The point in enumerating these incidents is to highlight the difference between a Rizal and a whole bunch of Filipino oligarchs from the Paternos, the Buencaminos, the Legardas (cabinet members in the Aguinaldo revolutionary government who offered their services to the Americans even before Aguinaldo's surrender), and the Quezons, the Roxases (American-sponsored Philippine presidents) to the Marcoses, Aquinos, Cojuangcos, Ramoses (all tied up to the U.S. State Dept. and American multinational corporations), a distinction that

neither Agoncillo nor Constantino theorize about. Instead, Constantino declares Rizal's counter-revolutionary assimilationism on the sole basis of a text—the 15 December Manifesto—that was never issued and, unlike his farewell poem which blessed the revolution, never had any impact on the people (Quibuyen 1997, 225–57). The trouble with Constantino's historiography is pointed out by E. San Juan Jr. (1983, ii–iii):

It is vulgar empiricism, a disservice to our cause, to negate Rizal on the sole testimony of his 15 December Manifesto "To Certain Filipinos"—a multiply ambiguous and overdetermined document to which a positive/negative hermeneutics should be applied—and substitute Bonifacio, as though they were irreconcilable opposites. That is crass metaphysical dualism. Such substitution of signifiers (we understand the collective referents) results only in abandoning Rizal to the reactionaries, from clerical apologists to the Establishment clerks. It simply yields a serviceable if deficient weapon to our enemies. It also makes a cult of the erroneously labeled "pragmatic" plebeian. We need a more historically specific and tactically flexible theorizing of positions.

E. San Juan's last point cannot be overemphasized. What we urgently need today, as we commemorate the centennial of the Revolution and Rizal's martyrdom, is a "more historically specific and tactically flexible theorizing of positions." But we cannot do this as long as we are under the spell of Agoncillo's and Constantino's vulgar Marxism. If we are to recover the radical tradition that unified our compatriots, both ilustrados and Katipuneros, towards the forging of the Filipino nation—a process that American imperialism brutally interrupted at the turn of the century—we would do better to look at their heroic generation through their own eyes.

### Notes

1. A good introduction to Gramsci's concept of the "national-popular" is David Forgacs' "National-popular: Genealogy of a concept," in *The Cultural Studies Reader* (1994). See also Ephraim Nimni's chapter 4 "Gramsci and the National Question" in his *Marxism and Nationalism* (1994).

2. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations of Rizal's correspondence are taken from the Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission (JRNC) English edition of Rizal's correspondence: Vol. II, Book 2, Parts 1 and 2, for "The Rizal-Blumentritt correspondence" (cited as *Rizal-Blumentritt*); and Vol. II, Book 3, for "Rizal's correspondence with fellow reformists" (cited as *Rizal-fellow reformists*).

3. See Del Pilar's major work, *La Soberania Monacal* (1889); *Monastic Sovereignty* (1957) has both the Spanish text and Encarnacion Alzona's English translation.

4. Del Pilar had two reasons: 1) he was escaping persecution for his anti-friar activities; 2) he was delegated by the *Comite de Propaganda*, an organization of reform-minded *ilustrados* in the Philippines, to set up *La Solidaridad*. See John Schumacher (1973).

5. Jose Ma. Basa figured in the earlier anti-friar campaign which led to the executions of the three secular priests, Gomez, Burgos, and Zamora in 1872, and to the deportations of suspected *ilustrados*. Basa, who was among those deported, eventually settled down in Hong Kong.

6. See Chapter 10 of Leon Ma. Guerrero's *The First Filipino* (1963) and Part 3, Chapter 3 of Austin Coates' *Rizal. Philippine Nationalist and Martyr* (1968).

7. Felipe Buencamino's memoir was originally written in Spanish. It was translated into English by Alfonso Lecaros and published by the Philippine Historical Association in 1969 (with notes by Mauro Garcia) to commemorate the 110th Birthday Anniversary of Buencamino. The 1969 edition, however, does not indicate the date in which Buencamino finished writing his memoir.

8. See the account of Rizal's grandniece, Asuncion Lopez Bantug, *Lolo Jose: An Intimate Portrait of Rizal* (1982, 196; 199).

9. For a background to the Rizal-Del Pilar conflict, see John Schumacher (1973), especially Chapter X, "Rizal Breaks With Del Pilar."

10. Florentino and Alberto were a cousin and an uncle, respectively, of Rizal's mother.

11. "Voices crying in the dessert where all are lost" (Rizal Centennial Commission translation).

12. For a background on Aguinaldo, see: Jonathan Fast and Jim Richardson (1979); Nick Joaquin (1977); Carlos Quirino, (1969); and Emilio Aguinaldo (1967).

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