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The Enlightenment and the Philippine Revolution

JOSE S. ARCILLA, S.J.

It is beyond doubt that the South American wars of independence in the first quarter of the nineteenth century were partially motivated by ideas earlier received from the eighteenth-century intellectual revolution of Europe.¹ Can we say that the same influence had a similar effect on the Philippine revolution which happened almost a hundred years later in a place as distant as the Philippines?

The Enlightenment was the crossroads of European history, a crisis, in a philosopher's view, of the European conscience.² It denied the past, and was in search of the new. Reason was the key to knowledge and the solution of human problems, no longer tradition or faith. Useful knowledge was prized and there was a marked zeal to educate the general populace. Philanthropy, resulting from the desire to improve human life, found expression also in the clamor for the removal of the tribute and other social distinctions to equalize vassals into citizens of the nation. Through modern economic and scientific progress, confidence in human perfection was unlimited and the golden age seemed at last within reach. Inevitably, a clash occurred between accepted principles of authority and the new attitudes.

1. See among others, Arthur P. Whitaker, ed., *Latin America and the Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1961); J. Vicens Vives, ed., *Historia de España y América* (Barcelona, 1961), V, pp. 514 ff.; Antonio Ubieta, Juan Reglá, Jose Ma Jover Zamora, and Carlos Seco, *Introducción a la Historia de España* (New York, 1965) esp. pp. 652-71.

2. Literature on the Enlightenment is overwhelming. But for the Spanish Enlightenment, one should start with Jean Sarrailh, *L'Espagne éclairée de la seconde moitié du XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1957). See also Angel Dominguez Ortiz, *La Sociedad Española en el siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Instituto Balmes de Sociología, Departamento de Historia Social Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1957); Vicente Palacio Atard, *El Despotismo ilustrado español* (Madrid, 1950); Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth Century Revolution in Spain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958).

THE SOUTH AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Recent studies warn against simplistic conclusions, but the South American wars of independence in the first decades of the nineteenth century occurred during this long clash between the new and the old. Chronologically, the final defeat of the Spanish forces under General Antonio José Sucre by the victorious troops of the revolutionary government of Colombia occurred in 1824. But the revolution did not end there. A new phase in the search for political independence began with the building of the new American republics after the war. By the same token, although the South American wars began with the famous *grito de Dolores* of 1808, the clamor for independence had already been heard much earlier. For, like other revolutions, the South American wars did not happen overnight but had been in preparation for some time.

A good portion of Spain's economic life in the sixteenth century depended on American silver. But by 1600, production in the American mines began to decline because of labor shortage and faulty technology. At the same time, the colonies had other sources of wealth which enabled them to compete in the trans-Atlantic trade. This led to the attitude that American capital should no longer be sent to the home government, but retained to finance local administration, defense, education, and other needs. Likewise, while the native *indio* population decreased, that of the *criollos* increased. Finally, because of the decline in metal production, most of the colonists or *peninsulares* invested in agriculture rather than in mining, sharpening the economic rivalry between the Americans and the Spaniards. In other words, America was coming into its own, forming its own distinctive personality, and becoming the dominant partner in Spanish economic life.³

Early in the eighteenth century, of course, the time was not yet ripe for separatist ideas, but already a growing sense of identity based on economic realities was palpable. Significantly, as in the Philippines, the expulsion of the Jesuits during the liberal reign of Charles III of Spain (1759-88) also meant the loss of certain privileges hitherto enjoyed by the rest of the religious clergy. At this time, there was an increase in criollo vocations to the priesthood, and although finally the king decided against secularization, the native-born clergy which

3. A brief summary is in John Lynch, *Spain Under the Hapsburgs*, vol. 2: *Spain and America, 1598-1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), especially chapter VII, "American Trade: Contraction and Crisis."

sharpened the inchoate sense of American identity were another factor in the later American independence movement.⁴

Two other groups encouraged the growth of a separatist mentality: the expelled Jews from Spain who migrated to the Americas, and secret societies, especially, freemasonry. The Jews never forgave Spain for their expulsion and, from the records of the American Inquisition, never really became part of American society. They kept their contact with other Jews elsewhere and supported subversive movements by means of covert propaganda. Cool and calculating, thoroughly acquainted with the ideals of the Enlightenment, they were a powerful group that fomented separatist ideas. The wealthy Jewish merchants in Amsterdam, Leyden, and London were the source of subversive writings which, despite the Inquisition, circulated in America, and at times passed around by the native-born American clergy.⁵

Another source of separatist plans was freemasonry. First introduced into Spain in 1726, by 1748 it had 800 members in Cadiz, which was the gateway to and from the Americas. Under Charles III, freemasonry enjoyed the most ample freedom. The leading political and social figures of the period were members of the lodges, and they succeeded in obtaining from the king limitations on the authority of the Inquisition. It was therefore not surprising that three years later, in 1751, the American Inquisition had its first case against a French surgeon in Lima, Perú, who admitted that in that city there were at least forty initiates of freemasonry.⁶

These factors, which on occasion worked together, fomented the dissatisfaction or, at least, the sense of a separate criollo identity in the eighteenth century. A historian described this identity and dis-

4. The literature on the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish dominions and their subsequent suppression as a religious order is abundant. As a start, see Magnus Mörner (ed.), *The Expulsion of the Jesuits from Latin America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965);—For the problem of the native clergy in the Philippines, see Horacio de la Costa, S.J. and John N. Schumacher, S.J., *The Filipino Clergy: Historical Studies and Future Perspectives* (Quezon City: Loyola Papers Board of Editors, 1979); John N. Schumacher, S.J., *Father Burgos: Priest and Nationalist* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1972); Antolin V. Uy, S.V.D., *The State of the Church in the Philippines, 1850–1875* (Tagaytay City: Divine Word Seminary, 1984).

5. Vicens Vives, *Historia de España*, 408–89.

6. See among others, Jose Antonio Ferrer Benimeli, S.J. *Masoneria e inquisicion en Latinoamerica durante el siglo XVIII* (Caracas: Universidad Catolica Andres Bello, 1973); *Masoneria, Iglesia e Ilustracion. Un conflicto ideologico, politico, religioso* (Madrid: Fundacion Universitaria Española, 1976–1979); *La Masoneria despues del concilio* (Barcelona, 1968); Josef Stimpfle, "L'impossible Cohabitation entre l'Eglise Catholique et la Franc-Masonerie," *La Pensee Catholique* 226 (1987): 64–75.

satisfaction as the "primary element" which resulted in the American revolutionary wars. If one adds to this the ideologies popularized during this period, one can appreciate the factors that prepared for the American wars of independence.

Two principal political theories were being debated among thinkers and writers opposed to the absolute exercise or claim of state power: the "populist," and the "contractual." Basically Thomist,⁷ the populist theories taught that public authority is shared by the ecclesiastical and the civil power. Both aimed at the external order and the common good of the community, the perfection of its individual members, and salvation in the life to come. That there might be harmony between the two powers, the civil should be subordinate to the ecclesiastical. State authority, however, is limited by the demands of human freedom and justice. Otherwise, it would be tyranny.

On the other hand, the Suarezian doctrine insisted that sovereign power was rooted in the community, and must never be exercised despotically. If it were, the people had the right to rebel and depose the tyrant. This is the famous doctrine of *regicide* wrongly attributed to the Jesuit Francisco Suarez (1548-1617), but actually already expressed by another Jesuit, Juan de Mariana, in the earlier *De Rege et Regis Institutione ad Philippum III* (1589).⁸

The contractual doctrine of state power was described by the Calvinist Philippe Du Plessy-Mornay (1549-1623), author of the well known *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1679). Royal power, he wrote, must not impose absolute norms or decisions. In succeeding to power, the ruler was under contract to his people. But, while the ruler was expected to govern justly, the community for their part were obliged to obey him. Public authority was delegated both by God and by the people. If abused, the people could legitimately take up arms to oust the ruler. This "right to resist" was justified by the social nature of public authority.

Contractualism reappeared in one form or another during the seventeenth-century English revolution. Earlier, in 1366, John Wycliff (c. 1320-84) had refused to pay the royal tax which King John Lackland (1199-1216) had promised to the pope. He had his own reasons, and when summoned to court, the English reformer declared, among others, that because sovereignty belonged to the nation, the king could not make promises unilaterally in the latter's name with-

7. Thomas Aquinas, *De regim, princ.* 1.6; *In 2 sent.* 44, 2, 2, 5; 1-2ae 2, 4 ad 2um; 2-2ae, 65, 3 ad 1um.

8. Francisco Suarez, *De charitate*, disp. 13; *Defensio fidei* 6, 4, 7 a. Juan de Mariana, S.J., *De Rege et Regis Institutione ad Philippum III* (1589), ch. VI.

out its consent.⁹ Later in 1647, the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1688) held the same view. Called the "People's Pact," it declared that all state powers came from the people. Accordingly, the people could rightly demand the extension of suffrage, a Constitution and a Parliament elected every six months, the suppression of monopolies, the death penalty, primogeniture, and feudal dues, and a share in the common good.

This was the inspiration of the universally acclaimed *Treatise on Two Governments* (1690) authored by John Locke (1632-1704), although its contents were not original with him and had a long history behind them. From Locke, it passed to the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1776 and the French Declaration of Human Rights in 1789. Translated into Spanish by Antonio Nariño of Bogota in 1794, it enjoyed widespread acceptance all over the American continent.¹⁰ Thus, when the South American revolutions occurred in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, two major historical precedents, based on long-standing political theories, had already proved to the South Americans that they were on the right road. Public authority belonged to the people, and they determined who and how it was to be exercised.

Doubtless, the South American revolution had its peculiarities. Bourbon Spain had already begun to introduce colonial reforms, but they were based on outmoded principles of authority: economic protectionism, political paternalism, racial assimilation, and Catholicism. The entire program was galling to the American intellectuals who, conscious now of who they were, demanded the treatment they thought they deserved.

Technically, Spain did not rule an empire. The Spanish colonies were "kingdoms" dynastically united under one Crown. But when in 1807 Napoléon Buonaparte (1769-1821) ousted the legitimate king, Charles IV (1788-1808), the Spaniards rose in revolt, introducing for the first time what we know as "guerrilla" (minor war) tactics. In the Americas, however, it occasioned a seminationalist and semimonarchist resistance against the new Napoleonic order. American leadership traditionally reserved for peninsular Spaniards was assumed by the American-born Spaniards, the criollos. It was in defense of the old legitimacy that the smouldering hostility between the penin-

9. See among others, George M. Trevelyan, *England in the Age of Wycliff* (London, 1899), or any other good history of England.

10. Antonio Narino, a man of wide literary tastes, eventually amassed a private library and owned a small printing press. See *Enciclopedia universal ilustrada Europeo-americana* (Espasa-Calpe), XXXVII, 1104-1106.

sulars and the criollos flared into open war. The movement for freedom against the French invader in Spain was paralleled by the movement for freedom from the Spanish colonizer in South America.

THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

How did this affect the Filipinos? The idea of justice, equality, good government was not new to them. But independence became a clear alternative for the Filipino propagandists of the last quarter of the nineteenth century once it was clear that Spain was reluctant to grant the reforms they were peacefully demanding. However, this occurred much later than the South American political movements. One, therefore, seeks an explanation for, first, this delay and, second, the source, of just exactly how the Enlightenment influenced the Filipino campaign for reforms, if at all.

Because of the distance and the lack of economic opportunities in the Philippines, Spanish migration here was not as heavy as in South America. Besides, the few Spaniards who did come remained in Manila to invest in the galleon trade, and only a handful lived in the provinces. But by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the economic boom in the Philippines led to the formation of a new elite, distinct from the old hereditary *principalia*. The latter continued their political role as representatives of the central government in Manila, mainly as recruiters for the hated *polo* or corvée labor and collectors of the *cedula*, a role which victimized them, since they had to reimburse any deficit in the expected revenue. But having lost their lands, they were no longer the economic leaders of the community. Not respected by their constituents because of their political role, they were despised by the *nouveaux riches* who had money but exercised no political power. The latter sent their sons to higher institutions of learning in Manila or abroad. Eventually, the latter took on a new sophistication in their dress, and attitudes, and spoke, read, and wrote in Spanish. Their ideal was a new Filipinized *Hispanidad*, distinct from that of the ordinary indio, except that both the wealthy and the poor maintained their ties with the Church, until they came into contact with Spanish liberalism in the peninsula.

Thus one finds the paradoxical situation in which those who had no position in the colonial government profited most from the new industrial growth. They were the same ones who sought the greatest Hispanization in their lives and identity with peninsular Spaniards. They invoked the law, for the Philippines had been made a Spanish province and its inhabitants had been put on an equal legal standing with the peninsulars.

But the law was one thing, the reality completely another. To the Spaniards the indios were exactly that, *indios*, on a lower rung of the social ladder. In the Philippines, their own country, they were bypassed, and peninsulars were appointed to government offices. Philippine-born military career men were subordinated to peninsular officers. And the Philippine-born clergy were perpetual assistants to the foreign-born missionaries. It was about this time that the derogatory phrase was used, *hijos del pais*.

A minor episode dramatized this anomaly. In 1886, an exposition was held in Spain to show the progress of the Philippines under her benign rule. Placed on exhibit before the curious gawking of the peninsulars were living members of Philippine minority tribes as types of the races Spain had civilized. Naturally, the Filipinos in Spain, criollos or Chinese mestizos, felt insulted. They felt demeaned as a race. Then they realized that they were Filipinos, not just Ilocanos, or Tagalogs, Bicolanos, Visayans, etc., a people different from the Spaniards, and with their own God-given human dignity and human rights.¹¹ From then on, the possibility of separation from Spain did not appear impossible. This tension must be considered when studying the Philippine revolution of 1896.

How influential were the ideas of the Enlightenment on the local separatist movement? Let us go back to the South American situation. One of the curious twists of history was the attitude of the *philosophes* toward Spain and Latin America. In advocating humane treatment for the indigenous Americans, Fray Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566), a former *encomendero* converted into a passionately pro-Indian Dominican friar, had exaggerated the cruelty of the Spanish *conquistadores* to discredit the secular government in the new world and put it under Church control. His reports of Spanish cruelty on the indigenous races were exploited by Spain's enemies and served as fodder for the *leyenda negra* of Spanish cruelty, obscurantism, inhumanity, etc.¹² In the eighteenth century, French and other for-

11. John N. Schumacher, S.J., *The Propaganda Movement: 1880-1895* (Manila: Solidaridad, 1973).

12. Literature on Fray Bartolome de las Casas, O.P. is abundant. One can start with Lewis Hanke and Manuel Gimenez Fernandez, *Bartolome de las Casas (1474-1566)*. *Bibliografia critica* (Santiago de Chile, 1954). The most famous of Las Casas' works is his *Brevisima relacion de la destruccion de las Indias* (1552) which he wrote for Philip II of Spain. This, together with the sketches of Theodore de Bry occasioned the negative conclusions about the Spanish colonial program in the new world. Ironically, it was Antonio Perez, a deposed secretary of the Spanish king who fanned the antiSpanish fever outside of Spain. See Romulo D. Carbia, *Historia de la leyenda negra en Hispano-America* (Madrid, 1944); Sverker Anderson, *La Leyenda negra. Estudios sobre sus origenes* (Gotenberg, 1960); Julian Juderias, *La Leyenda negra* (Madrid, 1917).

eign authors picked up the Spanish black legend for a totally different purpose, namely, to discredit religion, in order to establish secular power over the Church. But, partly because of Las Casas who had imbibed the political doctrine of the scholastics, partly because of the principles of the gospel, the Spanish crown had spared no efforts to treat the indigenous Americans humanely. This is reflected in the famous *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias*, the comprehensive collection of royal decrees for the administration of the colonies. In other words, right from the start, Spanish colonial policy, despite its shortcomings, was not an all-out exploitation of the natives, as Spain's enemies portrayed it, but was deeply imbued with the Christian tradition of respect for the human person. In the Americas, there was what historians today call the "fight for justice" for the native Americans. That is why Enlightenment ideas found an easy welcome in South America because the ground had been prepared for them. They were not a novelty. The only difference was that these ideas of freedom, justice, equality, etc. which had energized the people into war, appeared not only to have been *born of rational deduction*, but also confirmed by the success of such nonconfessional states as the new North American republic and the anti-clerical France created by Napoleon.

This doctrine was brought across the Pacific by a disciple of Las Casas, Fray Domingo de Salazar, the first bishop of the Philippines. Still not fully studied, the Salazar theory insisted that rather than despoiling a man, the gospel perfected what he already had.¹³ In other words, the freedom, the right to rule themselves in peace and justice were not to be denied the indigenous tribes of the Philippines if certain conditions were fulfilled. The Spanish Crown could rule the Filipinos only on condition that it promoted the gospel message of Christ, a view legalized by the Spanish *patronato real de Indias*.

That is why, according to Rizal, at the time of the conquest and in the later 300 years, the indigenous tribes had accepted the Spanish government. The Spaniards treated the people humanely. Against abuses by Spanish encomenderos, Spanish friars stood up to defend them. Native troops fought side by side with Spanish, some govern-

13. Jose S. Arcilla, S.J., "Christian Missions to China and the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 31 (1983): 468-76; John L. Phelan, "Some Ideological Aspects of the Conquest of the Philippines," *The Americas* 13 (1957): 221-39; Lucio Gutierrez, O.P., "Domingo Salazar, O.P., Primer Obispo de Filipinas (1512-1594). Trabajo Misional y Civilizador en Mejico y Filipinas (1512-1594). Trabajo Misional y Civilizador en Mejico y Filipinas (1553-1596)," *Philippiniana Sacra* 12 (1977): 514-68; "Labor Evangelizadora y Misional de Domingo de Salazar en Filipinas," XIII (1978): 430-96; "Domingo de Salazar's Struggle for Justice and Humanization in the Conquest of the Philippines (1579-1596)," XIV (1979): 219-82.

ment offices were even open to Filipinos. But by the second half of the nineteenth century this was no longer true. When rich Filipinos went to Spain, the excesses of the French revolution had already soured the Enlightenment for a good number of Spaniards. But liberal anticlericalism pervaded the air. It was a heady freedom that intoxicated the Filipino expatriates. Not without cause. As described by Blumentritt, Rizal, for example, found out that

... the Philippines was a land where hypocrisy had its seat; where the Spaniards, friars, officials, military men, etc. enjoyed unlimited power over body and soul. In Madrid, he could see the opposite: free-thinkers and atheists speaking freely about one's religion and his Church without shedding his blood. He found minimal exercise of government authority. He did not see the fight which he was expecting between liberals and clericals. He saw, on the contrary, that the republicans and carlists [i.e., conservatives] were many times united in order to realize a political ideal. Observing all this, a feeling of bitterness overwhelmed him when he compared the difference existing between the untrammelled freedom in the motherland and the theocratic absolutism in his land.¹⁴

This was precisely the period when in the Philippines the secularization of the parishes was a burning issue. Just as in America, the expulsion of the Jesuits caused a severe shortage of priests. Had there been enough secular priests in the country, there would have been no problem. But, first, despite the king's plan to secularize the parishes—in order to control the Church better—the badly trained Philippine-born clergy made him change his mind. Second, because the South American wars had been started by a native-born priest in Mexico, the Madrid government, not wanting a repetition of the events in the Philippines, adopted a policy of repressing the Philippine-born priests. Parishes they administered were handed over to the friars.

We need not repeat the details of this spoliation, the protests by Frs. Pelaéz and Burgos, and their climax with GOMBURZA. They are sufficiently well known. But let me bring out a few points.

Throughout this polemic, neither Pelaez nor Burgos ever descended to personal attacks, but limited themselves to the issue of church law, justice, and natural or inalienable rights, arguments based on reason and legal tradition. It was the friars who kept hammering at the personal shortcomings of the Filipino priests, their alleged ineptitude, suspicious orthodoxy or loyalty, and lack of culture. They clung to outmoded claims of racial superiority at a time when Rousseau's admiration for the *noble savage* had already inspired writings like

14. *Escritos de Jose Rizal* (EJR) I, 106.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and other fictional travel books. If the charges against the Filipino clergy were true, the solution was not to deprive them of their parishes, but to train them better and impose stricter norms for priestly ordination.

So far, the problem was within the Church. But the controversy catapulted Burgos into the public eye, and a trigger-happy government kept him under surveillance. Governor Carlos Ma. de la Torre (1869–71), anticlerical because he was a liberal, ordered the censorship of the mail, not only of Burgos, but of other prominent figures in Manila. When Burgos was finally implicated in the Cavite mutiny, the death sentence imposed by the military tribunal received immediate confirmation from Izquierdo, the new Governor General, notorious in Philippine history for his refusal to show the trial records to the Archbishop. But, historians agree, the public execution of three very probably innocent priests spelled the doom of the Spanish government in the Philippines.¹⁵

The sequel is well known. GOMBURZA, an internal problem of Church discipline, had repercussions outside of the Church. As Rizal later admitted, had it not been for 1872, he would have become a Jesuit and, instead of *Noli me tangere*, would have written the opposite.¹⁶

JOSE RIZAL

Rizal is without doubt the greatest protagonist for recognition of Filipino rights and equality before the law. A product of the best schools in his country, his contact with liberal rationalism in Spain reoriented his life. Befriended by the leading anticlericals, he gave up the external practices of the religion of his youth. One of the authors he most admired was Voltaire, who served both as his ideological and artistic inspiration. He even urged del Pilar to study French in order to be able to read the works of Voltaire, the chief *conteur et philosophe* of the Enlightenment.¹⁷ Among Rizal's sketches—at least, those preserved in the manuscript section of the Newberry Library (Chicago)—several depict Voltaire. Later, as an exile in

15. Leandro Tomo Sanz, "The Cavite Mutiny: Five Unknown Trials," in Jose S. Arcilla, S.J., ed., *Understanding the Noli: Its Historical Context and Literary Influences* (Quezon City: Phoenix Publishing, 1988), pp. 45–56; 1872, trans. Antonio M. Molina (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1973).

16. Rizal to Mariano Ponce, 18 April 1889: EJR, II, 3, 1, 356.

17. Rizal wrote to del Pilar, "... you will be able to read the complete works of Voltaire, whose beautiful, simple, and correct style is admirable besides being in harmony with his manner of thinking." EJR III, 2, 1, 274.

Dapitan and using rational arguments in an epistolary debate with his former spiritual guide and confessor at the Ateneo, he remained unconvinced of the claims of the Church, even to the extent of foregoing his plan at the time to marry the Roman Catholic Josephine Bracken.

What were Rizal's ideas which historians say planted a separatist attitude among his readers? By his time, Rizal wrote, relations between Spaniards and Filipinos needed to be changed.¹⁸ The traditional master-subject relationship between the two belonged to the past. To continue that would be counterproductive. The question was whether Spain would be willing to direct this change, or, by neglect, leave the initiative to the Filipinos, and risk a violent revolution. Change from above would always be peaceful, but no one could guarantee that change from below would be bloodless.

Spain had no choice actually, Rizal claimed. In Rizal's words, not only were the Filipinos despised, but they were insulted, denied the basic human capacity to reason so that they did not have even the ability to commit crime. They were described as brutes, mere muscles without brains! And, during the secularization campaign, and especially after the Spanish-American revolution, the government carried out an outmoded program of insult and degradation. Discrimination against native-born Filipinos was official policy. Parishes were taken from Filipino priests, not because they were inept, or heretical, but simply because they were Filipino. Legally equal to the peninsulars, the Filipino *ilustrados*, hispanized, well educated, many of them loyal to the Catholic Church, were despised by the peninsulars. And so, as in South America earlier, the Filipino criollos found themselves pitted against the peninsulars. This gave birth to their sense of being different, and at the same time gave them a sense of oneness among themselves. They no longer considered themselves as Tagalogs, or Visayans, or Bicolanos, but *Filipinos*. What physical and legal abuse could not effect, psychological abuse did. Thus was born the Philippine nation.

But still it was hoped Spain would change its mind. Revolution could still be avoided. Spain could continue in her benighted ways and abuse the Filipinos in one of four ways: brutalize the Filipinos, impoverish them, stop them from increasing in numbers, or divide in order to conquer them. None would succeed, Rizal thought. The more Spain brutalized or kept the Filipinos ignorant, the greater the possibility of a violent reaction. For it would not be the wealthy, the

18. Jose Rizal, *Filipinas dentro de cien años* (Manila, 1922).

contented, or the educated, but the poor, the desperate, the ignorant who would risk anything to effect a change. And as a matter of fact, against all odds, the Filipinos had succeeded in educating themselves, in cases even better than the Spaniards. Stop the population from increasing? Perhaps, Rizal wrote, this could be possible with the Caucasians, but not the Malays. How many plagues, floods, typhoons, battles for and with the Spaniards had taken Filipino lives? And yet, the population had increased! Divide and conquer, then? Not in Rizal's time. Previously, military units were sent to regions other than their own, the Visayan troops to Ilocos, the Tagalogs to the Visayas, the Bicolanos to the Tagalog area. But, instead of dividing the people, they came to realize they had the same grievances, or that they had one common adversary. Instead of dividing, the practice had united them into a people.

Repression, then, was imprudent. Quoting Voltaire, one of his favorite authors, Rizal wrote that every increase of pressure built up a greater counter-pressure, a greater head of steam behind the determination of the Filipinos to win equality with the white man and a share in their own government. It was no longer whether changes or reforms should be introduced, but *what* these ought to be.

It is here that Rizal clearly stands head and shoulders above all the other propaganda writers. For while the others were negative, he approached the matter positively and wrote that both Filipinos and Spaniards needed to reform. The Spaniards, first, by granting freedom of speech and representation in the Cortes. Separated by two oceans from each other, these two measures were needed for proper legislation. There were many others, but this was basic, in Rizal's mind. Rizal advocated a total moral regeneration of his countrymen, without which they did not deserve self-rule. That is why, to the end, he refused to think of violent revolution against Spain.

The Filipinos needed two basic social virtues: *economia* and *tansigencia*. *Economia*, that is, making the best use of existing resources, for no nation has all the resources it needs. And *tansigencia*, that is, mutual give and take. For if the people wanted a democratic state, they should be ready for it. Democracy is intelligent cooperation, government by dialogue, not that one's opinion might prevail over the rest, but to arrive at a consensus for the common good. This was not easy, and the Filipinos, an extremely sensitive people, must learn by hard discipline and education to cooperate with one another.

Exactly how many read Rizal will never be known, for only about 10 percent of the population knew Spanish. But one notes in Rizal, as in the French philosophes, confidence in the power of reason. He

dreamed of educating his countrymen, training them to think and use their minds properly. Call him a humanist or a romanticist, but as Fr. Florentino in the *Fili* said:

I do not mean to say that our freedom must be won at the point of the sword; the sword counts very little in the destinies of our times; but I do say that we must win our freedom by deserving it, by improving the mind and enhancing the dignity of the individual, loving what is just, what is good, what is great, to the point of dying for it. . . . If Spain were to see us less tolerant of tyranny and readier to fight and suffer for our rights, Spain would be the first to give us freedom. . . .¹⁹

The number of those who read Rizal is not as important as that he *moved* his readers to action, including, unfortunately, the Spanish colonial government. But those who felt he had aimed at them wanted to be rid of him; his friends wanted to make him their leader. Luna, for example, did not leave Rizal in Hongkong in peace, urging him to lead a revolution. But, convinced the Filipinos were not ready, Rizal wanted rather to prepare the people before they should enjoy self-rule.

One must note that Rizal was convinced the friars should not meddle with the education, or even with the government of the people. Clearly influenced by the rationalism of the Enlightenment, he had lost respect for the friars in the Philippines, and was willing to let them continue in the country, provided they limited themselves to purely evangelical work.

THE MAKING OF A REVOLUTION

Four things are needed for a revolution to succeed: a complaint, a perceived solution, a leader, and the means to carry out the revolutionary plan. We can trace two of the elements that prepared for change: a complaint, namely, the unequal treatment given to the Filipinos; and a perceived solution, namely, the reforms demanded by the propagandists best expressed by Rizal's hope in education for the Filipinos. Besides, one must note that, by their nature, colonies are self-liquidating. Even the most egoistic and inhuman exploitation of colonies develops the latter. In time, they become as good as the mother country, as was the case of the Spanish colonies in South America.

19. Jose Rizal, *El filibusterismo*. Tr. Leon Ma Guerrero (London, 1969), p. 297.

Will the home government, then, grant freedom to the colony it has developed? This was the underlying issue in the propaganda movement. It was occasioned by an ecclesiastical issue at a time when the anticlerical liberalism spawned by the Enlightenment pervaded Spain. To the end, Rizal refused to accept violent revolution as the solution. But at one given moment, fortuitous circumstances unexpectedly converged, and a leader arose who channeled what otherwise would have been an aimless outburst of energy.

Andres Bonifacio, though not personally known to Rizal, was present during the organization of Rizal's *Liga Filipina* in Tondo. When Rizal's exile aborted the Liga, Bonifacio organized his *Katipunan*. Although not an intellectual, we know that Bonifacio had read about the French revolution and Rizal's novels. But Emilio Jacinto, a younger man inspired by Bonifacio, had the gift of writing. It is in Jacinto's *Ang dapat mabatid ng mga Tagalog*, that we find perhaps an instance of the influence of the Enlightenment on the leaders of the Philippine revolution. The *Katipunan*, he wrote,

... pursues a great and important object: to unify the hearts and minds of the Filipinos by means of a sincere oath in order that this unity may have the strength to tear the thick veil that binds the intelligence and in order that the true road to Reason and Enlightenment may be found.²⁰

And in Bonifacio's "What the Filipinos Should Know" we read:

What, then, must we do? The sun of reason that shines in the East clearly shows to our eyes that have long been blinded the path that we ought to follow: by its light we can see the claws of cruelty threatening us with death. Reason tells us that we cannot expect anything but more and more insults, more and more slavery. Reason tells us not to fritter away time hoping for the promised prosperity that will never come and will never materialize. Reason tells us to be united in sentiments, in thoughts and in purposes, in order that we may have the strength to find the means of combating the prevailing evils in our country.²¹

It is now time for the light of truth to shine. . . .²²

On 26 December 1896, the military court found Rizal guilty of the crimes of "founding illegal associations and of promoting and inciting to rebellion, the first being a necessary means to the commission of the second. . . ." In the judgment of the court, his writings had

20. In Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Revolt of the Masses: The Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1956), p. 85.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 92-93.

22. *Ibid.*

provided the inspiration and the strength that energized the people to rise in arms against the government. Despite his denials of any personal participation in the uprising or contact with the rebels, he was sentenced to die before a firing squad.²³

A recent book, however, hints that the role of the ilustrados is not enough to understand the Philippine revolution. Instead of looking at the revolution "from above," as has been customary, the author writes, we should also look at it "from below." Following the methodology of structuralism, Iletto's *Pasyon and Revolution*²⁴ seeks to prove that it was the traditional verse compositions in Tagalog of Christ's Passion and death that gave the ordinary people a form in which to express their inner sentiments.²⁵ The unlettered people identified themselves with Christ, and they were willing to suffer and die, confident that, like Christ, they would rise in glory, at the end of their suffering. In other words, if we understand this theory rightly, the leaders would not have found the followers to mount a revolution if the latter had not been motivated—not necessarily by the Enlightenment but by their Christian values.

Scholars disagree on how valid this method is in historical research, and I shall not join this debate. But we get a glimpse into some of the followers' mentality from the acts of the trial of Rizal. He was implicated in the uprising because, without his knowledge or consent, the captured insurgents admitted using his portrait and his name as a rallying point. At least, certainly, two important members of the Katipunan, Emilio Jacinto and Jose Turiano Santiago, ended speeches with almost identical words: "Long live the Philippines! Long Live Liberty! Long live Dr. Rizal!" As the court sentence expressed it,

Jose Rizal Mercado is the principal organizer and the very soul of the Philippine insurrection; the author of associations, periodicals and books dedicated to the cultivation and dissemination of ideas instigating the people to rebellion and sedition; and the supreme head of the revolution.²⁶

23. *The Trial of Rizal*, trans. Horacio de la Costa, S.J. (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1961), 137.

24. Reynaldo C. Iletto, *Pasyon and Revolution. Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1979). See also Milagros C. Guerrero, "Understanding Philippine Revolutionary Mentality," *Philippine Studies* 29 (1981): 240-56; Reynaldo C. Iletto, "Critical Issues in 'Understanding Philippine Revolutionary Mentality,'" *Philippine Studies* 30 (1982): 92-119.

25. Rene B. Javellana, S.J. (ed., annot., tr.) *Casaysayan nang Pasyong Mahal ni Jesucristong Panginoon Natin na Sulat Ipag-alab nang Puso nang Sinomang Babasa* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1988).

26. See note 20 above.

CONCLUSION

We know that, although the Katipunan aimed explicitly to topple the colonial government, an unforeseen incident precipitated the events. The discovery of their plot left Bonifacio's group no other choice but to fight. But revolutions do not happen overnight. A long preparatory period, often unnoticed, always precedes the open clash of arms. Like the South American wars, a major factor in the Philippine Revolution certainly was the suffering of the people under a less than ideal government. Against this was the gospel tradition upholding the dignity of the human person, a tradition preached by the missionaries, though perhaps in cases not always followed. But the people had no voice and were resigned to their fate. They had to be made conscious of their situation. Above all, they had to be given an ideal, the courage and confidence that life could also be better. As a friend enthusiastically wrote to Rizal after reading the *Noli*, what everyone else felt and knew but was afraid to express was finally said openly.²⁷ The court, then, was right, but perhaps for the wrong reason. Rizal, a man clearly influenced by the Enlightenment, was the spokesman of the oppressed and silent Filipinos who finally found a voice—and not only a voice, but the resolve to change things, violently if necessary.

27. Perhaps the reaction to the *Noli* which Rizal most appreciated was that of Blumen-tritt who had written that the novel was like a stone aimed at a beehive, and one written *mit Herzblut* and speaks to the heart. Similarly appreciated was the critique by Fr. Vicente Garcia, a native-born Filipino priest and doctor in theology, who wrote that work was a piece of literature and should be judged accordingly. Neither did it attack religion, but only its abuses. Several close friends sent their congratulations to Rizal.