

The Malolos Congress of 1898 and the University of Santo Tomas

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The constituent Congress convened at Malolos in 1898 by General Emilio Aguinaldo to elaborate a Constitution for the first Philippine Republic is considered one of the most salient milestones along the historical road of the Philippine Revolution. Some people might say that the Congress was doomed to fail in its purpose from its inception, but the circumstances under which it worked, and the internal merit of the fundamental law it produced makes of the Malolos assembly one of the most significant and glorious achievements of the Revolution.

In the present study one aspect of particular interest is to show the relations, both positive and negative, between that congress and the University of Santo Tomas.

The story of the remote circumstances leading to the convening of the Congress are too many and complex to be told in the present study. Actually they are the history of the Philippine Revolution, a history presumably well known to every student of Philippine history. However, some facts about the proximate circumstances will retold here by way of preamble or introduction.

1. *Antecedents in fast motion*¹

The Philippine Revolution was prepared mostly by a generation of young Filipino students who from 1880-1895 wholeheartedly engaged here and in Europe in a propaganda campaign for the promotion of the idea of Philippine self-rule and eventually of total independence from Spain. They were the forerunners of the Revolution, and their cause is known as the *Propaganda Movement*. The most prominent of them are today national figures and heroes, like Jose Rizal, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Mariano Ponce, Graciano Lopez Jaena, Jose Ma. Panganiban, to mention only a few. The torch they carried in pursuit of that ideal would pass from them to Andres Bonifacio and to Emilio Aguinaldo.

After ten years of stay in Europe (except for a six-month visit to the Philippines in 1887-1888), the national hero Jose Rizal returned to the Philippines in 1892, and organized the *Liga Filipina*, an association aimed at working for the improvement of the people. Four days later, July 7, he was arrested and deported to Dapitan (Northern Mindanao). And soon after, one of the *Liga* members, the plebeian Andres Bonifacio, founded the secret society *The Katipunan* for the violent overthrow of the Spanish Government. It took four years for the plans of the *Katipunan* to be hatched and be capable for real action. On 19th August, 1896, the *Katipunan* was discovered, and this moved Bonifacio to raise the *Cry of Balintawak*, which initiated an insurrection against Spain that spread throughout the Islands.

By the end of that year, Jose Rizal, still his exile in Dapitan, was charged by the Spanish authorities with having instigated the insurrection by his writings, and was sentenced by a military court to be executed by a firing squad (December 30, 1898). But his political martyrdom, instead of abating the revolution, inflamed it more. Then the leadership of the revolution passed from Andres Bonifacio to a young *capitán municipal* of Cavite, Emilio Aguinaldo, who eliminated his rival Bonifacio and assumed the

¹ For fast consultation on the events of the Philippine Revolution, many textbooks can be useful and available. Among others, I have consulted GREGORIO ZAIDE, *The Philippine Revolution*, Manila, 1954; and ANTONIO MOLINA, *The Philippines through the Centuries*, Manila, 1961, vol. II.

leadership, with the title of General, of the revolutionary forces. But the war only led to a situation of stalemate, and by on December 15th of that year 1897, a cease-fire was arranged between the two warring sides called the *Pact of Biak-na Bato*. In compliance with one of the terms of the pact, General Aguinaldo agreed to go on exile to Hong Kong.

The Pact of *Biak-na-Bato* brought about an uneasy peace to the country that lasted for only four months until the end of April 1898 when war was declared between Spain and the United States. The Philippines became one of the first targets of that international conflict. The American fleet anchored in Hong Kong was ordered to attack the Philippines, and on May 1st it entered the Manila Bay under Admiral George Dewey and completely destroyed the Spanish fleet off the port of Cavite. Aguinaldo returned from Hong Kong, joined the American forces, and resumed his fight against Spain in his native stronghold of Cavite and the provinces around Manila.

On May 13, as a result of the battle of Manila Bay, Manila surrendered to the blockading allied enemy forces. The Americans entered the city in haste without permitting the entry to the allied Filipino forces that were surrounding the city by land. And the following day, Admiral Dewey unilaterally announced the establishment of a military government for the Islands. The exclusion of the Filipinos from the share in the spoils was an affront to General Aguinaldo, who preferred not to break relations with the Americans suddenly, but to continue campaigning together with them for the independence of the country. And the following month, on June 12, at Kawit, Cavite, he solemnly – and unilaterally also – declared the Independence of the Philippines from Spain.

While the Filipino revolutionaries were widening the war theatre in various parts of the Islands, Aguinaldo thought of transferring his headquarters from Bacoar (Cavite) to a more strategic place far from the reach of the American naval guns in the Bay, to the town of *Malolos*, Bulacan, 25 miles northwest of Manila, where he arrived on the 9th of September. Malolos became virtually the revolutionary capital of the Philippines. And there, with a few days of hurried preparations, on September 15, he convened a

revolutionary congress, the historic *Malolos Congress*, the main object and task of which was to write and enact a Constitution for an independent Philippines. The sessions were to be held in the spacious church of Barasoain, today declared national monument.

2. *The Congress*²

The inaugural session was presided over by Ambrosio Rianzares Bautista, a man with relevant academic background, for he had degrees in philosophy and theology and in canon and civil laws to his credit. The following day, the officers of the congress were elected: Pedro Paterno, president; Benito Legarda, vice-president; Gregorio Araneta and Pablo Ocampo, secretaries. And the first matter tackled by the deputies was to declare ratified the Philippine Independence proclaimed by Aguinaldo on June 12. Soon a controversy arose between Apolinario Mabini, member of there revolutionary cabinet of Aguinaldo, and congressman Felipe Calderon both brilliant law graduates, over the power of the Congress to draft the projected Constitution, with Mabini arguing that the critical political conditions of the country necessitated the centralization of powers in the person of the President. But the constitutionalists led by Calderon carried the day in favor of the assembly.

Accordingly, the assembly decided to form a committee to draft a text of the constitution, and so nineteen deputies were nominated and approved to compose it, thirteen of whom were graduates of the University of Santo Tomas. The committee, in turn, entrusted to experts the presentation of drafts. Three drafts were submitted to the committee, authored respectively by Apolinario Mabini, Pedro Paterno and Felipe Calderon. The drafts by Mabini and Paterno were shelved by the committee because they were considered influenced by the Spanish Constitution. The Calderon Plan was approved. It was an eclectic constitution based on those of France, Belgium and the Latin American republics of Costa Rica, Brazil, Nicaragua, Mexico and Guatemala. These models were acceptable to the committee because, in

² The most authoritative work on the Malolos Congress is FELIPE G. CALDERON, *Mis Memorias sobre la Revolución Filipina*, Manila, 1907. Calderon was not only the leader of the constitutionalist group in the Congress, but also the author of the approved text of the Constitution.; see also JUAN LOPEZ DEL CASTILLO, *Malolos y sus Prohombres*, Manila, 1950.

the words of Calderon in his *Memorias*, "the Filipinos resembled more the peoples of Latin America, especially in religion, idiosyncrasies and civilizations". But he did not use the constitution of the United States "because Filipino culture, philosophy and traditions were different from those of the American people".³

It took the months of October and November for the Congress to debate on the merits of Calderon's draft article by article. And, except for one fundamental change, the whole text was approved by the assembly. The change in question was in Title III on the relations between the Church and the State. Calderon, "a devout Catholic, and influenced by political ideologies of Spain, England, Costa Rica, Mexico, and other countries where the Church and the State were united, desired to have a similar system in the Philippines, as embodied in Title III of his original constitutional draft, article 5 of which reads: "The nation shall protect the cult and ministers of the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion, which is the religion of the State, and shall not use its revenues for the expenses of any other cult".

This article aroused acrimonious debates between Calderon and his opponents, particularly the freemasons and anti-Catholic Tomas G. del Rosario, Anacleto del Rosario and Antonio Luna, and others, who assailed the Church for being the cause of much suffering and oppression during the three centuries of Spanish rule. Del Rosario proposed an amendment providing for the separation of Church and State. In the end, a vote was taken which resulted in a tie, and the tie was finally broken by the congress secretary, Pablo Tecson, who had abstained in the first balloting, and now voted in favor of the amendment.⁴

3. *The Men, Membership and the Thomasians*

Historians of the congress are in disagreement as to the total number of the deputies who attended the sessions of the assembly. Antonio Molina asserts that "originally the members

³ F. CALDERON, *Mis Memorias*, Manila, 1907, pp. 16-18; also cf. G. ZAIDE, *The Philippine Revolution*, p. 256.

⁴ Cf. ZAIDE, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-263.

of the Congress were 85. Later they were increased to 92, and finally, they reached up to 102.”⁵ For his part, Gregorio Zaide gives us totally different figures: “The membership of the Congress”, he says, “varied from time to time; so it was difficult to determine the exact composition throughout its history. At the opening session, only 50 members were present out of 136 constituting its total membership. Of the 136 members, 68 were elected and 86 appointed. Later, on July 7, 1899, the membership was increased to 193, of whom 42 were elected and the rest appointed.”⁶

Whatever the exact numbers of the Congress might be, the role they played made of it a showcase of the high degree of the cultural progress Philippines had attained at the end of the nineteenth century. The congressmen “symbolized the flower of the Filipino intelligentsia.”⁷

Some American observers and reporters who were present at the sessions came out very well impressed by the intellectual and human qualities of the representatives. F.D. Millet, who was not moved by the oratorical qualities of Aguinaldo as he delivered the inaugural speech, spoke of the congressmen with admiration. “They were”, he said, “exceptionally alert, keen and intelligent”.⁸ John Barret, an American correspondent, former minister to Siam, reported: “These men whose sessions I repeatedly attended, conducted themselves with great decorum and showed a knowledge of debate and parliamentary law that would not compare unfavorably with the Japanese Parliament.”⁹

By their professions, the congressmen represented the cross-section of Philippine life and culture. Most of them were college graduates, and some had had further education in European universities. “Among them were 43 lawyers, 18 physicians, 5 pharmacists,

⁵ A. MOLINA, *The Philippines through the centuries*, II, p. 194.

⁶ MOLINA, *op. cit.*, II, p. 194.

⁷ ZAIDE, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

⁸ F.D. MILLET, *The Expedition to the Philippines*, New-London, 1899, pp. 261-264, cited by ZAIDE, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁹ J. BARRET, “Some Phases of the Philippine Situation”, in *Review of Reviews*, New York, July 1899, p. 65, cited by ZAIDE, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

2 engineers, 7 businessmen, 4 agriculturists, 3 educators, 3 soldiers, 2 painters and 1 priest.”¹⁰

From the particular point of interest of the present history of Santo Tomas, a question frequently asked by its students and alumni is what impact the University's graduates had in the debates of the Malolos congress. The answer is that the caliber of those debates could hardly be explained without the intervention of academicians deeply versed in the studies of philosophy and jurisprudence. Of course, these educated men were not the exclusive products of the University of Santo Tomas. A great number of its graduates had been trained earlier by the best secondary schools of the capital, such as the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and of the Ateneo Municipal, respectively run by Dominicans and Jesuits, which formed them in the pre-university studies leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.¹¹

As said earlier, we do not have the complete list of membership of the Malolos deputies due to the different versions provided by the various historians. But we know the names of those who were members of the various commissions created by the congress, as well as the names

¹⁰ Cf. ARSENIO MANUEL, *Felipe Calderon*, Manila 1939, pp. 71-72, cited by G. ZAIDE, *The Philippine Revolution*, p. 253. According to A. Molina, F. Millet gave different statistics about the profession of the congressmen: “There were 40 layers, 16 physicians, 5 pharmacists, 2 engineers, 1 priests, and the rest included businessmen, industrialists and landowners” (A. MOLINA, *The Philippines*, II, p. 194). As far as those lawmakers who were certainly alumni of Santo Tomas, the university records show that the priest was Fr. Gregorio Aglipay. Of the soldiers, two were General Antonio Luna and Brig. Gen. Edilberto Evangelista; educators were several who had obtained the title of Professor of Secondary Education, namely, Hipolito Magsalin, Graciano Cordero, Ignacio Villamor, Jose Basa, Perfecto Gabriel and Raymundo Alindada. Regarding the four agriculturists, this professional title might include graduates of the university with the title of land surveyor, like Felix Bautista, Joaquin Gonzalez, Marcial Calleja, Raymundo Alindada, Simplicio del Rosario and Tomas Arejola. Among the seven businessmen, perhaps one was Joaquin Gonzalez, who had received the university title of Expert in Business Administration.

¹¹ This means that in the list of Thomasians in Malolos to be given below, the bachelors of Arts were students either of Letran, or of the Ateneo or of the university's own Colegio de Santo Tomas. In the latter college the students took up only the subjects of the fifth year. But in whatever school they had studied, the baccalaureate degree was always conferred by the University of Santo Tomas. Such was the case of the bachelor's degree of the Atenean Jose Rizal.

of those who approved and signed the text of the Constitution. Of the eight commissions created by the congress, by far the most important was the eighth in charge of drafting the text of the Constitution. It was composed of the following:

Felipe G. Calderon, <i>Chairman</i>	Pablo Ocampo
Gregorio Araneta*	Aguedo Velarde
Jose Albert*	Higinio Benitez
Jose Alejandrino*	Tomas G. del Rosario
Antonio Luna	Jose Ma. de la Vina
Felipe Buencamino	Jose Luna
Alberto Barreto	Mariano Abella
Joaquin Gonzalez	Juan Manday
Hipolito Magsalin	Arsenio Cruz Herrera
Basilio Teodoro ¹²	

It may be affirmed that, of the above nineteen members of the Commission, sixteen were certainly graduates of Santo Tomas. There is doubt only about the three marked with an asterisk in the above list, namely, Araneta, Albert and Alejandrino, because they are not found in the graduation records, but several biographers report them to have studied in Santo Tomas. Actually, it is possible that they enrolled but did not finish their careers in the Philippines.

By January 1899 the most noble part of the Congress' work, the Constitution, was completed. In the final session, ninety-one delegates present there had the honor of affixing their signatures to the text of the *Constitución Política de la República Filipina promulgada el 22 de Enero de 1899*.¹³

¹² F. CALDERON, *Mis Memorias*, p. 9-10.

¹³ The text of the Malolos Constitution is published in *The Laws of the First Philippine Republic (The Laws of Malolos) 1898-1899*, National Historical Commission, Manila, 1972 (reprinted in 1985), pp. 88-104. Bibliographer W. Retana, who possessed a copy of the first edition, included its bibliographical description in his *Aparato Bibliográfico*, III, n. 406, with the list of the 91 signers. And his list was reproduced in *The Law of the First Philippine Republic* quoted above.

It should be a motive of pride for the University of Santo Tomas that of the 91 signers, 63 were its graduates with degrees granted in the major faculties or in some cases with titles given to them in the vocational careers of the secondary education. They represent almost two thirds or the total, or more precisely 67%. Here is the list of the Thomasians with their respective degrees:

**THE SIXTY-THREE THOMASIAN DEPUTIES TO THE
NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF MALOLOS WHO SIGNED THE
POLITICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE
(January 21, 1889)**

Aguedo Velarde	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1884</i>
Alberto Barreto	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1893</i>
Ambrosio Rianzares Bautista	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1850</i> <i>Bachelor, Theology, 1854</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1857</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1865</i>
Antonio Luna	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1898</i>
Antonio Feliciano	<i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1890</i>
Arcadio del Rosario	<i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1871</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1875</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1875</i>
Ariston Bautista	<i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1885</i>
Ariston Gella	<i>Licentiate, Pharmacy, 1895</i>
Arsenio Cruz Herrera	<i>Licentiate, Canon Law, 1888</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1892</i>
Benito Legarda	<i>Bachelor, Law, 1875</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1879</i>
Ceferino de León	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1877</i>
Domingo Samson	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1892</i>
Felipe Buencamino	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1866</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1870</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1871</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1876</i>
Felipe Calderon	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1893</i>
Felix Bautista	<i>Land Surveyor, 1885</i> <i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1889</i>

Felix Ferrer Pascual	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1892</i>
Fernándo Canon	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1877</i>
Graciano Cordero	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1873</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1878</i>
Gregorio Aguilera	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1889</i>
Higino Benitez	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1871</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1881</i>
Hipolito Magsalin	<i>Bachelor, Theology, 1865</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1865</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1868</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1871</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1872</i>
Hugo Ilagan	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1862</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1865</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1866</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1874</i>
Ignacio Villamor	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1884</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1884</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1893</i>
Isidoro Torres	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1891</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1895</i>
Isidro Paredes	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1896</i>
José Basa	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1860</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1864</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1866</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1883</i>
José Infante	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1888</i>
José Lerma	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1896</i>
José Luna	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1877</i> <i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1884</i>
José Salamanca	<i>Licentiate, Pharmacy, 1888</i>
José M. de la Viña	<i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1878</i> <i>Licentiate, Pharmacy, 1898</i>
Joaquín González	<i>Land Surveyor, 1875</i> <i>Expert, Business Admin., 1877</i>
Juan Manday	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1868</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1871</i> <i>Bachelor, Law, 1872</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1882</i>

Juan Nepomuceno	<i>Bachelor, Law, 1868</i>
Justo Lucban	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1880</i> <i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1888</i>
León Apacible	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1886</i>
León Guerrero	<i>Bachelor, Pharmacy, 1875</i> <i>Licentiate, Pharmacy, 1876</i>
Lorenzo del Rosario	<i>Medical Practitioner, 1891</i>
Lúcas González Maninang	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1882</i>
Manuel Xerez Burgos	<i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1878</i>
Manuel Gómez Martínez	<i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1881</i>
Marcial Calleja	<i>Land Surveyor, 1885</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1894</i>
Mariano Abella	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1889</i>
Mariano Crisostomo	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1891</i>
Mariano del Rosario	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1838</i>
Mateo Gutiérrez	<i>Bachelor, Philosophy, 1866</i> <i>Bachelor, Canon Law, 1870</i>
Mena Crisólogo	<i>Bachelor, Law, 1869</i>
Narciso Hidalgo Resurrección	<i>Bachelor, Law, 1870</i>
Pablo Ocampo	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1882</i>
Pablo Tecson Roque	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1888</i>
Patricio Baylon	<i>Notary, 1889</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1892</i>
Perfecto Gabriel	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1886</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1888</i> <i>Licentiate, Canon Law, 1892</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1896</i>
Raymundo Alindada	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1887</i> <i>Land Surveyor, 1888</i> <i>Professor, Second Education, 1888</i> <i>Expert, Industrial Mechanics, 1888</i>
Salvador V. del Rosario	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1879</i> <i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1886</i>
Santiago Barcelona	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1883</i>
Sebastian de Castro	<i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1891</i>
Simplicio del Rosario	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1884</i> <i>Land Surveyor, 1885</i> <i>Licentiate, Law, 1891</i>

Sotero Laurel	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1881</i>
Teodoro Sandico	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1880</i>
Tomás Aréjola	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1885</i> <i>Land Surveyor, 1886</i>
Tomas G. del Rosario	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1886</i>
Trinidad Pardo de Tavera	<i>Bachelor, Arts, 1875</i> <i>Licentiate, Medicine, 1894</i>
Vicente Foz	<i>Licentiate, Law, 1893¹⁴</i>

From the cultural point of view, the Malolos Congress marks, not just a milestone in the history of the Philippines, but the moment of harvesting what four centuries of education had produced. That education had been imparted by all schools of the Islands at all levels, from the earliest and humble mission schools, through the grammar schools, the secondary schools and the colleges to the University of Santo Tomas and to the men of Malolos.

4. *The University suppressed by the decrees of Malolos*

While the Congress was engaged in framing the Constitution, Aguinaldo's government was busy with other particular needs of the new society that were not covered by the general provisions proper of a fundamental law. Those needs were taken care of by presidential decrees. And is to these decrees that we must turn to know the policies of the new Republic on all areas of human and social activity: national government, local governments, trade and commerce, army regulations, paper money, public lands, education, etc.

Of particular interest to the present study are the decrees affecting educational policies at all levels, primary, secondary and tertiary. Obviously, any decree addressed to the tertiary level had to affect the only university existing in the country. On October 19, 1898 Aguinaldo signed a transcendental decree drafted by the

¹⁴ The above list of graduates and their respective degrees has been culled from the original records of the University Archives after laborious research through dozens of volumes and thousands of graduates in the Section of "*Diligencias de grados*" (DG, corresponding faculties and years).

Department of "Fomento"¹⁵ headed by Felipe Buencamino. It is easy to imagine that this decree must have fallen like a thunderbolt on the community of professors of the University of Santo Tomas. Entitled "Decree establishing the Literary University of the Philippines", it was clearly a death sentence dictated against the centuries-old Dominican university.

The new "Literary University" was meant to be not just a rival or a counterpart of the Dominican university, but as a substitute. Actually the three existing ecclesiastical faculties of Santo Tomas are not even mentioned in the decree, for the simple reason that those studies were neither within the competence of the State nor of high interest to the revolutionary government; and besides, enrolment-wise, they had been reduced to the minimum in the 1890's, except for Canon Law which was studied also by the students of Civil Law. With the birth of the new literary university, there would be no room in Santo Tomas for all the other civil faculties (Civil Law, Medicine, Surgery, Pharmacy and the notary career). Here are the main provisions of the decree:

**"Decree of October 19, 1898 establishing
The Literary University of the Philippines**

I, Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy, President of the Revolutionary Government of the Philippines, decree with the consent of my Council of Government:

– An educational center is hereby created, to be called *Literary University of the Philippines*.

– The faculties to be taught in it are: Both Laws, Administrative Law, Medicine and Surgery and Pharmacy, including Doctoral courses, and Notary.

– The titles of *Licentiate* and *Doctor* in those faculties and of Notary will be issued by the President of the Government. Those issued by the *University of Santo Tomas* of Manila after August 12 of this year will be considered *null and void*.

¹⁵ In Aguinaldo's government, the Secretaría de Fomento corresponded roughly to the contemporary Spanish Ministerio de Fomento, which was in charge of Public Works, Education, Agriculture and Commerce.

- The internal *government* of the Literary University will be discharged by the *person elected by its claustro* of professors. The person elected will be called Rector.
- The *appointment of professors* and of a Secretary General will be made by the *President of the Government* upon presentation of the officers of the Secretary of *Fomento*.
- The certification of studies of said faculties issued by the University of Santo Tomas before August 13 of this year will be valid and they will have legal effects.
- Those who have enrolled in any faculty for the school year 1897-1898 in said University [UST] maybe approved in that course after undergoing an examination in the new University [Literary University].”¹⁶

Little more can be said about this new academic institution, because little is known about its curricular and extracurricular activities. We know the composition of its teaching faculty for the faculties of Civil and Canon Law, Medicine and Surgery, Pharmacy and Notary studies. Successive decrees of Aguinaldo appointed the professors of each faculty, determined the curriculum and the textbooks to be used in the Faculty of Law, and assigned the members of the Board of Examiners in the various faculties of the university.¹⁷ It goes without saying that the *catedráticos* were alumni of Santo Tomas, and that the curricula were copied from the same university. We also know that “the first rector was Don Joaquin Gonzalez, and the second, Don Leon Ma. Guerrero”, both Thomasians, and that “on September 29, 1899, the university held its first commencement exercises at Tarlac.”¹⁸ By that time, therefore, the revolutionary government, its army and, with them, the Literary University, had abandoned Malolos and were retreating north from the advancing American forces.

¹⁶ This decree has been published in its original Spanish text in *The Laws of the First Republic (The Laws of Malolos), 1898-1899* (ed. by Sulpicio Guevara, National Historical Institute, Manila, 1994, pp. 51-52).

¹⁷ See the Decrees, *ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

¹⁸ Cf. G. ZAIDE, *The Philippine Revolution*, pp. 277-278.

Meanwhile, in Manila and at the university of Santo Tomas, classes had been suspended for the entire school year 1898-1899. It is difficult to know what sentiments of fear and frustration were felt in the academic circle, what hopes or plans for the uncertain future the Dominican administrators of the University had in mind, because we lack basic documentation on that period, especially the *acta* of the Dominican provincial chapters. Unfortunately, no chapters were held in Manila or in Spain from 1896 to 1906.

Furthermore, the Dominicans of the university must have missed deeply their lack of contact with the secondary schools of the country over which they had exercised the power of direction and supervision granted to them by the Royal Order of 1865. Witnesses to that long familiarity are the 30 huge volumes of the enrolment and grades that all the high schools reported from 1865 to 1898, and constitute one of the most precious treasures of the archives.

That direction and supervision was gone too. On October 24, 1898, a presidential decree declared an *Instituto Burgos* established for the studies of secondary education and the vocational courses. Again, by a stroke of the pen the historic and most important schools of the Philippines, such as the Colegio de San Juan de Letran, the Ateneo de Manila and other prestigious private schools of Intramuros and environs and of the provinces would have to disappear unless they conformed with the new Burgos Institute. Here are the main provisions of the decree:

**“Decree of October 24, 1898 establishing
the Burgos Institute**

– An educational center called *Instituto Burgos* is officially established in which the studies of Secondary Education and of vocational courses will be given.

– The Director of the Institute will be *appointed* by the *Director of Public Instruction*.

– The *founders* and *directors* of centers of Secondary Education must have the *authorization* of the *Director of Public Instruction*.

– The students of the *Instituto Burgos* and of the secondary schools *must enroll in the Literary University of the Philippines*.

– The entrance examinations will be made at the *Instituto Burgos*.¹⁹

The signs of the times had arrived and they were clear. The end of the Spanish rule was months away even as Spain and the United States were negotiating a peace treaty at Paris, which was signed on December 19, 1898, and ended the Spanish-American War. For the new Republic too, the end came after successive military reversals against the Americans and by the capture of General Aguinaldo in 1901.

5. *Other Men of the Malolos Republic*

The framers of the Constitution of Malolos deserve a place of honor in Philippine history. For the university of Santo Tomas, they were not the only graduates who must figure in its hall of fame. It is a very easy mistake, a fairly frequent one, committed by its chroniclers and historians to concentrate on the wise legislators of Malolos, while other equally great men who served the first Republic faithfully and wholeheartedly have gone by unconsidered. These were the writers, the journalists, the poets and the novelists who put their gifts and talents at the service of the people.

The Republic's first official organ was *El Heraldo de la Revolución* established by Aguinaldo two weeks after the inauguration of the Malolos Congress. A little earlier, a private and influential newspaper, *La Independencia*, had been founded by Antonio Luna, assisted by a strong editorial staff composed of Fernando Ma. Guerrero, Cecilio Apostol, Epifanio de los Santos, Jose G. Abreu, Rafael Palma, Mariano V. del Rosario, Salvador V. del Rosario, Jose Palma, Leon Ma. Guerrero and Felipe Calderon. With the exception of Jose Palma, they all were young graduates of Santo Tomas. Of the so-called "triumvirate of poets of the Revolution", two were Thomasian alumni, namely, Fernando Ma. Guerrero, "the greatest Filipino lyricist in Spanish", whose best known poems is

¹⁹ See the full text in *The Laws of the First Republic*, pp. 57-58.

Mi Patria”;²⁰ and Cecilio Apostol, whose poetry was “unexcelled in its epic grandeur.”²¹

Other alumni became well known historians, political columnists, first class journalists, who wrote in elegant, fluent, pure Castilian style, among them, Rafael Palma, Jaime de Veyra, Sergio Osmeña, Dominador Gomez, Jose Clemente Zulueta, Apolinario Mabini, Epifanio de los Santos, Pacifico Victoriano, Macario Adriatico, Isabelo de los Reyes, etc.

The Malolos Constitution died in its infancy. It was in force only for eighteen months, from its proclamation on January 22, 1899 until March 23, 1901 when fugitive Aguinaldo having been captured by the Americans took an oath of allegiance to the United States.²² But the men who drafted it under most strenuous circumstances survived to continue serving the country under a new foreign master with undiminished dedication, confident that of a future day of independence would dawn. And what was in store for the University of Santo Tomas? The future seemed uncertain, but, like anew fabulous Phoenix, it soon rose from the ashes of official suppression to open its classes after a bad dream of one idle year.

In concluding this story, a speech of the American President William McKinley comes to our mind very appropriately. Speaking in November of 1899 to a visiting party of Protestant pastors, McKinley “piously” explained to them how after consulting the two political parties of the nation, “I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night” to decide whether to annex the Philippines to the United States. And one late night it came to me “this way.” *The way* was that the United States should annex the Philippines for four reasons. The fourth reason, probably the most convincing one for him, was that “there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all [the Philippine

²⁰ His most important poems have been collected in a volume entitled *Crisálidas*.

²¹ His poems were collected and published under the title *Pentélicas*.

²² See ZAIDE, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

islands] and *educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them.*"²³

What McKinley thought to have come to him as "light and guidance in the middle of the night" has motivated every Filipino historian to make disdainful comments about it. "Why, may we inquire", says G. Zaide, "was it necessary to 'educate' the Filipinos whose education was older than that of the Americans and whose University of Santo Tomas was founded 25 years ahead of Harvard University;²⁴ to 'civilize' the Filipinos whose Asian civilization dates as far back as the early centuries of Angkor Tom and Bوروبудор; to 'Christianize' the Filipinos who had officially been Christians for centuries and who were already worshipping God in hundreds of Christian churches at the time when the Pilgrim Fathers and their descendants were burning 'witches' in the New England towns?"²⁵

Zaide's ironic remarks make a point certainly. But from the angles of education, civilization and progress, there is a shorter way of reacting to the self-appointed "manifest destiny" of America as expressed by its President. McKinley should have read the reports of the journalist F.D. Millet and of the war correspondent John Barret, both Americans, who were present at the sessions of the Malolos Congress and who came out with the deep impression that those Filipino lawmakers were "exceptionally alert, keen and intelligent". In fact, they produced a most worthy Constitution for their country purposely putting aside as model and guidance the universally acclaimed American Constitution. □

²³ ZAIDE, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-239, footnote 56, quoting. JOHN BANCROFT DEVINS, *An Observer in the Philippines*, Boston 1905, pp.69-71; and HOMER C. STUNTS, *The Philippines and the Far East*, New York, 1904, pp. 143-144.

²⁴ Harvard University is "the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. It was established on September 8, 1636" (*Wikipedia*, "Harvard University"), that is, twenty five years after the *Foundation Act* of the University of Santo Tomas, on April 28, 1611.

²⁵ ZAIDE, *ibid.* *Angkor Tom*, the capital of the Khmer empire (now Cambodia), was built from the late 12th century to the early 13th century. *Borobudur*, located in the Indonesian province of Central Java, northwest of Yogyakarta. Built between 750 and 850, it is the largest Buddhist monument on earth. The *Pilgrim Fathers* were emigrants who sailed from Plymouth, England, in the *Mayflower* on the 18 September 1620 to found the first colony in New England (USA). Of the 102 passengers, about one third were Puritans.