

The Centuries of Struggle in the Philippines: 1600-1900

Introduction

The writing of history demands the acceptance of general principles which serve as foundation stones for any kind of history. Without these principles history may become a fancy, a myth but not a reasoned study of the human actions and events that have shaped the lives of people.

A historian knows how difficult it is to be impartial, to forget completely modern ideas. And yet, he must strive to be dispassionate, to give to everybody his due, regardless of religion, nationality, race or philosophy. It will help a historian to remember that things and events that now belong to the past once belonged to the future. In order to judge past history a writer has to transport himself mentally to the time when those events took place. History becomes intelligible only in so far as man detaches himself from the current trend of thought and transposes himself into the past. The quality that makes a writer a real historian is the capacity to escape the present and situate himself in the past. We cannot judge past history with the eyes of the present, rather we have to judge the present under the light of the past.

It is easy to judge past events from our own view-point. Yet it is necessary to bring back into life the motivations, the reasons why people of the past acted as they did. How easy it

is to pass judgement on them, how difficult to judge them with equanimity. A historian focuses his attention on the genesis and development of epoch-making events, regardless of their present validity. Only the man who understands what the Germans call the *Zeitgeist* can write balanced history.

Not too rarely, historians writing about pre-Hispanic or Hispanic history of the Philippines project today's history of the Philippines into the remote past. Their present experiences, what the country has passed through in its long fight for independence from Spain and America, what they have lived after the young republic came into life just after the nightmare of the Japanese occupation, the colonial hangover of Spain and America, all their personal experiences are flashed back into that distant past. From the present stand-point they judge a past wrapped in nebulous history. In so doing they forget that from that time to the present many years and even centuries have passed. Any historian who projects the present into the past becomes anachronistic and his history may become meaningless.

Today the country, the Republic of the Philippines, globally taken, is a single political unity. The government centralized in Manila, holds sway over all the islands that comprise the physical reality that is the Philippine Islands. The people owe allegiance to this central government. Once upon a time this was not so. To judge past Filipino history, whether pre-Hispanic or Hispanic, through modern eyes, betrays the true sense of history. The present day Filipino, with the immense and rich historical wealth behind him, a tradition of three hundred years of Spanish history and fifty years of American education and adaptation, plus the new experiences of the young Filipino Republic, cannot be compared to the inhabitant who lived in the Islands before the arrival of the Spaniards. The modern Filipino is new, distinct, different. He belongs to another epoch and time. He is of a totally different nationality. During pre-Hispanic times or early Hispanic times there were no defined boundaries, no central government, no idea of solidarity, no common religion, no tangible expression of nationalism. The inhabitants of the Philippines were not one people but rather a congeries of different tribes. Physically they lived in the same land as today's Filipinos. Historically they were very different.

In the struggle for independence from Spain during the last century some Filipino nationalist leaders exaggerated the abuses of the colonial power. Some modern historians, in their justified aspirations for nationalism, exaggerate the anti-Spanish feeling of the Filipino people. This anti-Spanish sentiment is still quite prevalent in our own contemporary times. We have to accept that the history of the Filipino people has not only been shaped but also written by foreigners. We agree with Filipino historians when they say that Filipinos should write their own history. And write it from their own nationalistic point of view. This cannot, however, be abused. We sympathize with the Filipino people and modern historians who feel they have been accused of being an inferior race. They strongly protest against this negative attitude. The colonial hangover and trauma are recent experiences. Millions of Filipino citizens were born under a foreign flag. Their rebellion against that colonial past can easily be understood. In their search for national identity they rebel against the insults and abuses of the colonial masters. Filipinos are still emotional about their colonial experience.

And yet, in order to get a total view of the struggle for nationhood and independence, we ought not to be too sentimental or biased. To explain Filipino history from the exclusive nationalistic point of view, revolving, as it were, round the nation, may be tantamount to historical misunderstanding. Filipino history ceases to be intelligible and meaningful the moment we isolate it and take it a self-standing universe. The history of the Filipino nation, the history of nationalism and independence are responses to concrete historical challenges. The Philippines was conquered and colonized by Spain and occupied by the Americans from 1565 to 1946. A span of almost four hundred years. We have to understand Filipino history within this concrete historical situation. Outside the Spanish and American context Filipino history loses its intelligibility.¹ If even the greatest historical nations of the world, be they China, Greece, Rome, the Arab nation, Western Europe or the new world powers like Russia or the United States are not universes in themselves, then less so

¹ The history of Western Europe becomes only intelligible in the context of Greco-Roman culture and political domination. Spain's history has no meaning outside Rome's conquest and domination for over 500 years and Arab occupation from 711 to 1492, a span of almost eight hundred years.

are other new emerging nations of the world among which we include the Filipino nation.

We acknowledge that social, cultural and nationalistic interests so influence the historian that the wider field of historical understanding may be overlooked, if not entirely distorted. History must be related to the social environment. But in order to understand Filipino history we have to study it not only in its "Filipinity" but also in its "universality", or at least, as part of a wider universe. Arnold Toynbee, one of the famous historians of the modern age, asks himself this relevant question:

"Is there some intelligible field of historical study which is absolute and not merely relative to the particular social environment of particular historians?"²

In any study of Hispanic-Philippine history, as in the study of the history of the birth and growth of nationalism, we have to take into account that the Spanish stay in the Philippines was a long one. The understanding of the concept of time in Philippine history is very important. During that long stay we find many historical movements and undercurrents. The changes that took place during the Spanish era are great and of vital importance to the Philippines. We cannot take those centuries as a small parenthesis, as a short chapter in the history of the Philippines. The whole history of the Philippines from 1565 to 1898, a span of almost three and a half centuries, is oftentimes taken as a single whole, a *totum historicum*. And this *totum historicum* is dominated by conquistadores and Friars on the one side, and Filipinos struggling for independence on the other. In the long period of Spain's stay in the Philippines, there are different historical processes, various undercurrents, manifold periods where men were influenced by different schools of thought. In fact, the changes and advances effected from one generation to another during the Spanish era, though always connected by the invisible link of causality and progression, confer peculiarities to one period which are not common to the next. Even at one and the same period people have ideas and thoughts already discarded by others. All this points to the fact that we have to subject the Philippine-Hispanic period to a critical historical analysis.

² ARNOLD TOYNBEE, *A Study of History* (10 vols.), London, 1954, vol. I, pp. 15-18.

The title of my study might be misleading for my readers. The centuries of struggle is a very suggestive title but it might not reflect the historical process as it really happened. We are oftentimes inclined to think that since Magellan set foot on Cebu in 1521 to 1898, when Spain was defeated and abandoned the Philippines, the Filipinos resisted the foreigners wherever they went. This long historical process is pictured as a perpetual struggle against the foreign invader. When we read the history of the Philippines, with its emphasis on the revolts against Spanish authorities, we seem to think that the whole Spanish era is specified by a perpetual warfare. And this is not true. The reasons for the revolts are varied. Some of them were caused by abuse and exploitation. Others were motivated by just aspirations. Others, a few, by religion. In the XIX century they are a protest against obscurantism and anti-liberalism. The last stage of the struggle, from the Propaganda Movement to 1898, was a war for independence and political freedom that no military might could arrest.

A Retrospective View

When Legaspi came in 1565 there was no national unity among the Filipinos. The archipelago was inhabited by numerous ethnic groups with no central political government. The basic social political unit was the *barangay*. The rulers were the *datus* whose authority was not very extensive. The early Filipino regarded as a stranger and an enemy everyone not connected with his *barangay*. This gave rise to the birth of many different dialects. This, in turn, worked against the development of central unity. In spite of their lack of unity the early Filipinos had acquired a certain degree of civilization. This cultural heritage, though tribal, was noble and rich. The early Filipinos challenged the Spanish *conquistadores*. Lapulapu defied Magellan in 1521. Tupas accepted Spanish rule with Legaspi in Cebu in 1565 only after he saw the futility of resisting. Rajah Sulaiman and Raja Matanda put up a strong resistance but were finally defeated. They were conquered by arms or submitted peacefully and they accepted Spanish rule. In all this resistance no national effort was involved. They resisted because they wanted to be free, to remain independent. There was no concerted effort to resist Magellan, for the people of Cebu were at war with the people of

Mañtan. The people of Manila were enemies of the people of Tondo. Humabon welcomed Magellan while Lapulapu challenged him. Raja Sulaiman resisted Legaspi while Lakandula welcomed him. They did not think and act as a nation with a common political system, a unifying religion or a common cultural heritage. The Bisayans who helped Goiti to conquer Manila in 1570, one year before Legaspi established it as a royal city, did not feel that they were fighting against their own flesh and blood. They helped the Spaniards conquer the city. Their sense of nationhood and shared historical experience were lacking. We will have to wait until the XIX century to see the new bond born among the Filipinos. But between Legaspi and the XIX century there is a span of well over 250 years of Spanish rule.

Arrest of National development?

It has been averred that the coming of the Spaniards retarded and arrested the birth of nationalism and the creation of an independent nation. We do not know exactly what the Philippines might have become, or how fast the Filipinos might have acquired the sense of unity and nationhood if Spain had not come to the Philippines. But knowing the situation of the Philippines and their geopolitical importance in the XVI century we can presume that the Philippines might have fallen into the sphere of Islamism. When Magellan touched the shores of Cebu in 1521, Islamism had not yet reached Manila. When Legaspi came to Manila in 1571 the rulers were Moslems originally come from Borneo. A supra-barangay concept of government was developed due to the influence of Islamism. This, however, was still in its embryonic state. Even accepting this fact, it does not follow that the people of Luzon would have formed a national Islamic state. Islamism was already rooted in Borneo, Mindanao and Jolo when the Spaniards came. The Moslems were left to themselves during the large part of the Spanish period and yet no supra-regional or national state came into existence. The Moslems of Mindanao, Jolo and Borneo did not convert to Islam the people living in the hinterlands. Even to this day, in spite of advances in communication and political development, the tribes of the hinterlands do not form part of Islam. The formation of large sultanates, with a powerful centralized system of government, did not emerge where

Islamism became triumphant. Even in the Malay world, after the collapse of the Madjapahit empire, no universal Islam state emerged. All this inclines us to think that had Spain not come, the people of Luzon and Visayas would have followed a similar development to the people of Mindanao, Jolo and Borneo.

We have also another point of reference in the mountain tribes of northern Luzon. These tribes, living in the fastnesses of virgin forests, were not touched by the Spaniards. Their contacts with them were peripheral and warlike. Left to themselves no supra-barangay or wide political state has come into being. Practically untouched by the Spaniards they have remained basically as they were when Spain came to the Philippines. No national state was developed.

If we cast a look at the world during the so-called contact period, the time of the Spanish arrival and first decades of their stay in the East, we see that the Philippines were open to many historical possibilities. It is not far-fetched to think that, had not Spain come here, the whole of the Philippines, or at least Luzon, might have become another Taiwan. The aborigines of Formosa are racially and culturally speaking akin to the people of the Mountain Provinces of Luzon. Taiwan today is a Chinese island.

After the fall of the Ming dynasty (1646) and the establishment of the Manchus in Peking resistance in mainland China practically ceased. A strong maritime challenge was offered to the Manchus by the famous private-patriot and robber-baron Ch'eng-kung, better known as Koxinga. He was a strong supporter of the Ming dynasty against the Manchu conquerors. As he could not prevail against the Manchus even along the coasts of mainland China he turned his eyes toward Formosa. In 1661 he defeated and expelled the Dutch from Formosa. This success against the Europeans emboldened Koxinga. He dispatched the Dominican Vittorio Ricci to Manila with a Chinese embassy to demand the submission of the Philippines.

Here is the message:

"Your small kingdom has ill-treated and oppressed our sampan traders in a manner not very different from that of the Dutch, thus giving rise to double dealing and discord. Further, the affairs of the island of Formosa

have now been settled satisfactorily, and the trained troops under my command number hundreds of thousands, my warships many thousands. Further, only a narrow strip of water separates the island of Formosa from your small kingdom, so that by setting sail in the morning one may reach there by nightfall. My first thought was to go at once in person with a fleet to punish your evil ways; but then I called to mind that although you have given me ample reason to be displeased with you, you have in recent years shown some signs of repentance... I have therefore decided to detain the fleet at Formosa and send instead the Father Ambassador".³

The Spanish authorities sent a defiant answer, while at the same time prepared the defences of Manila. The authorities were seized with panic and recalled back to Manila all the Spanish garrisons in the Moluccas and Mindanao. Koxinga did not carry out his threat of invasion. He died in 1662. The removal of the garrisons, both from the Moluccas and Mindanao, had far-reaching consequences for the Christianization and Spanish conquest of Mindanao.⁴ The Moluccas escaped the sphere of Spanish influence. Mindanao, left to itself for many decades, continued its process of islamization. Formosa, instead of becoming a Spanish colony adjoined to the Philippines, was conquered and *Sinicized*. The natives today are mere cultural relics. Due to ethnic closeness of the aborigines to the Igorrots of the Mountain Provinces and for geopolitical reasons Formosa might have gravitated into the orbit of the Philippines. In fact it did not. What happened to Formosa might have happened to the Philippines. We say that the Chinese conquest of the Philippines is not a far-fetched possibility because already in 1574 the city of Manila was put to the siege by another Chinese pirate, called Limahong, who with a powerful fleet made a determined effort to conquer the city. Both the Filipinos and the Spaniards resisted him heroically. Defeated in front of Manila, he settled in Bolinao, Pangasinan. Again the Filipinos and Spaniards, with determination and courage, searched for him and expelled him from there. Had the Filipinos and Spaniards failed in their defense of Manila, the

³ MURILLO VELARDE, *Historia de la Provincia de Filipinas de la Compañía de Jesus*, Manila, 1749, n. 642, as quoted by H. DE LA COSTA, S.J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*, Harvard Un. Press, Camb., Mass., 1961, p. 450.

⁴ Cfr. *Ibidem*, pp. 451-454.

whole history of the Philippines might have changed. Luzon might be today a province of China as Formosa became in the XVII century when Koxinga expelled the Dutch from there.

Following again the possibilities, the ifs of history, the Philippines might have fallen into Japanese power. When the Spaniards came Japanese *Wako* groups had already settled down at the mouth of the Ibanag river (Cagayan river). We must not forget that Japan, at the end of the XVI century, was emerging from the "Middle Ages". The Shogunate, ruled by military rulers, made Japan a strong centralized nation.

In 1590, the unifier and conqueror of all Japan, Hideyoshi, demanded from Governor Dasmariñas of the Philippines to accept Japanese sovereignty. Dasmariñas prepared himself for the defense of Manila. The city was fortified in the expectancy of a Japanese invasion. Hideyoshi, instead of coming to the Philippines, embarked himself on the invasion and conquest of Korea. His failure and defeat there are outside the scope of our study, but this change of policy saved the Philippines from Japanese invasion. Had the Japanese come the Spaniards would have not been able to resist them for their resources were small and quite limited. And Luzon might have become a part of the emerging empire of Japan. And this some four hundred years before the Japanese occupation during the Pacific War.

Most probably if Spain had not come, the Philippines might have fallen into the hands of another European colonial power. We have to remember that the XVI century was the peak of the so-called Age of Discovery. European nations went to all the extremes of the earth. This European impetus, started by Portugal and Spain, was followed by Holland, England, France and other European nations. The Philippines might have fallen prey to them, more especially to the enterprising Dutch who already, at the end of the XVI century, had established themselves in nearby Indonesia. And how they would have dealt with the Filipinos is a question that is difficult to answer. For wherever Calvinist people, or Saxon nations, have come into contact with primitive people they have displaced them or simply obliterated them. Here in the East we have Australia and New Zealand as proof that natives were practically obliterated. They are white nations. The natives are few, ostracized. They live at the out-back.

The Filipinos initially resisted the encroachments of the Spaniards. They did so for love of personal freedom, not so much out of a sense of national solidarity. As soon as they saw the superiority of the Spanish arms and their determination to stay, they decided, albeit reluctantly, to accept the Spanish rule. And we can say that the conquest of the Philippines was the fastest and most humane of all those carried out in modern history. And it was done with a minimal spilling of blood.⁵

Birth of First Republic in Asia

When Spain came here the Philippines had perhaps one of the most primitive political and social systems of government in South East Asia. When Spain left it was the most developed of all the nations under colonial rule. Japan lived in isolation from the West for centuries. China during the late rule of the Manchus fell prey to European colonial powers. India, Burma, Malaysia were under British colonial rule. Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, known later on with the name of Indochina, fell into the French sphere of influence and became colonies of France. Many of these nations, before they were conquered by European colonial powers, had a glorious and long history behind them. And yet they obtained their independence only after the end of the II World War. The Philippines, by the middle of the XIX century, was well on its way to independence.

When Spain was defeated in 1898, Aguinaldo and the Filipinos proclaimed the Philippine Republic. It was the first Republic of Asia. Only the coming of America and the capitulation of the *ilustrados* to the American giant stopped the life of the newly born Republic. The Philippines had the political maturity to live independently of America. The number of learned lawyers, writers, politicians, military experts and artists find no comparison with any other colonial nation of Asia. The standard of

⁵ E. G. Bourne, a specialist in Hispanic-Philippine studies, has this to say: "In the light, then, of impartial history raised above race prejudice and the religious prepossessions, after a comparison with the early years of the Spanish conquest of America, or with the first generation or two of the English settlements, the conversion and civilization of the Philippines in the forty years following Legaspi's arrival, must be pronounced an achievement without a parallel in history", in *General Introduction to The Philippine Islands, 1494-1898*, E. H. BLAIR-J. A. ROBERTSON (eds.), 55 vols., 1903-1908, vol. I, p. 37.

education, from many points of view, could be compared to that of Spain itself and many other European nations.

We have to ask ourselves this question: Why was the Philippines the first nation to form an independent Republic in Asia? And this already at the end of the last century? The great nationalist leaders of the rest of Asia, like Gandi, Sut-Yan-Sen, Sukarno and others are figures who appeared only in the XX century, while the Philippines, even before Rizal, had great men fighting for independence from colonial rule. We have to look for a historical explanation for this outstanding fact. Could it be that Spain's political system, for all its evils and negative aspects, was responsible for this uniqueness? Has the Christian religion anything to do with the birth of nationalism and the struggle for independence? Did not all the Filipino political figures and heroes of the struggle for independence come from Catholic institutions? Is not religion responsible for the birth of Filipino nationalism? This we are going to see now.

Religion and the Rise of Filipino Nationalism

Since I have asked myself a few questions I feel I have to try to give an answer to them. There is a need for a study on religion's contribution to the birth of nationalism in the Philippines.

I hold that because of religion, in our case the Christian religion, the inhabitants of the Philippine Islands became Filipinos. They acquired a sense of solidarity, a sense of belonging, a sense of unity. In one word, because of religion, the Philippines became a nation. The fundamental truth of universal brotherhood and equality preached by Christianity left the Filipinos amazed and wondering. I do not hold that the Spaniards treated the Filipinos always as brothers. Many times they did not. The abuses and injustices committed against them, especially during times of political crisis, are a basic fact of history which nobody can deny. But through Christianity the Filipinos came to realize that they did not belong to one tribe or clan, but to a more universal world. Those who accepted Christianity were unified under one religion. Given the fragmented state of the Philippines the people could not right away become one nation. European nations

did not become unified political entities overnight. Centuries had passed before most of them came to have strong central governments. Germany became unified only in the last century. Italy's unity was achieved in 1870. Many other European nations came into existence after the political refashioning that followed World War I. Many of them have passed through long periods of occupation and exploitation. It was the peoples' common experiences that awakened in them the sense of political unity. Often times this political unity has only been possible when cultural and religious unity has been achieved. In the case of the Philippines the common Christian experience, lived sometimes under trying circumstances, awakened in them the sense of nationhood. And it emerged in the Christian regions and islands of the Philippines. It did not emerge in the pagan high lands or in Moslem Philippines. Even today the Moslems look more to the islamic world, the *Dar-ul-Islam* than to the government of Manila. Where Christian religion became part and parcel of the Filipinos, there in the course of time, the spark for freedom and independence grew faster and deeper.

The Christian Experience (1565-1850)

The key to understand Filipino-Spanish history is religion. In fact religion holds the key to the understanding of progress and development in most countries of the world. Modern culture tends to be secularistic. Religion has been discredited. Religion's influence in public life and politics does not seem to be too strong in the nations influenced by the West. Secularization of Modern and Western civilization is now prevalent. We have witnessed the breakdown of the Christian way of life and a rejection of the Western Christian Heritage. Still, in spite of this secularistic view of the world, for the understanding of history we have to have recourse to religion. Great philosophers of history, like Toynbee⁶ and Christopher Dawson⁷ have deeply studied the direct relation between Religion and Progress and, in the case of Dawson especially, the vital role that Christianity played in the making

⁶ ARNOLD TOYNBEE, *An Historian's Approach to Religion*, London, Oxford Un. Press, 1956

⁷ CHRISTOPHER DAWSON, *Progress and Religion*, Image Books, Doubleday & Comp. New York, 1960.

of the West.⁸ Religion holds the key to history not precisely because it draws man closer to his supernatural destiny but because progress is rooted in religion. We will not be able to understand the history of the Philippines, the growth of nationhood, without an understanding of the role Christianity has played among the Filipino people. We do not refer to a folkloristic religion, or a kind of 'fiesta'-religion, a Sunday or 'sacristy' religion, but rather the dynamic spirit of Christianity. Christianity changed the mores, the hearts and minds of the Filipino people. Christianity gave them a new vision of their lives and a new vision of the world. It explained to them interpersonal relations, social interaction and political involvement.

The monks of Europe shaped the life of the Romano-Germanic people. After the collapse of the West Roman Empire and the birth of the new nations of the West, Christianity through the monks, became a most dynamic historical force. The monk did not only evangelize the new races that came into contact with Christianity. He not only transmitted to them the knowledge, learning and civilization of the past, but he educated them in every aspect of human endeavor. Swamps were dried up. Forests cut down. Irrigation became widespread. Roads and bridges constructed. Towns built. The art of government was taught to them. In one word, the monks were the real educators of Europe. The Romano-Germanic people answered the challenge positively. They learned slowly, but once they passed the stage of religious and cultural childhood into adulthood, they produced monumental achievements. Unfortunately, in the last two centuries, these people, who were made and shaped by the Christian religion, have rebelled against it. Technology and Science have become the interests of the new Western civilization to the detriment of the Religion that nursed them for so many centuries.

Coming to the Philippines we see a historical parallel between the monks of the Middle ages and the Friars. The Friars not only Christianized the Filipinos, but played as great a role as the monks in Europe. It is a little unfortunate that not many studies have been done on the social, economic, educational, cultural and religious role played by the Friars in the development of the

⁸ *Ibidem*, *Medieval Essays*, Image Books, New York, 1959; *Understanding Europe*, Image Books, New York, 1960.

Philippines. It has been said that the history of the Philippines begins and ends with the Friars.⁹ They were responsible not only for the Christianization of the Philippines, but for the new vision of the world, the new *Weltanschauung* which so radically affected the lives of the Filipinos. In their answer to Religion's challenge, the Filipinos not only embraced it as a means to attain everlasting salvation, but as a vehicle for justice, humanization and progress. This new vision of the world, this Christian *Weltanschauung*, was the result of the long process of Christianization and Christian experience and the education given in the centers of learning.

The education given to the students, with its emphasis on the Christian concept of freedom and the inalienable rights of man, had in seed all that was necessary for the growth and formation of the sense of nationhood. The Christian education imparted in the University of Santo Tomas and in the Ateneo was directed towards the acquisition of a humanistic view of life. With its emphasis on the freedom of man, on human dignity, on man's supernatural vocation, on the love of good, the beautiful, the true, the professors were giving the Filipinos the tools to build up their own nation. Those seem to be abstract philosophical concepts, but studied in the light of the concrete historical situation of the Philippines, they were found to be very existential and dynamic. Basic fundamental concepts like justice, humanization, equality were applied to the concrete case of the Philippines and its people. The educators of the Filipinos, most of whom were Friars, knew the implications of the education they were offering to the Filipinos. And yet they strived to give it meaningfully. The philosophical and theological basis of this education gave power, dynamism and direction to the struggle for independence. When we read many of the letters of Rizal and some other Filipino Propagandists and revolutionaries, there is behind them a theological background and an appeal to God and to man's supernatural destiny and vocation. If all men are children of God, if all have been created equal, why is this denied to the Filipinos in their everyday lives? If the greatness of a man resides in his being a creature of God, why is it that Spaniards do not treat the Filipinos as equals? That is, behind their writings we see the ferment

⁹ LEON M. GUERRERO, *The First Filipino. A Biography of Rizal*, Manila, 1963, 15.

of theology learned in the classes in Ateneo and the University of Santo Tomas. Theology was responsible for the struggle for freedom. Theology never teaches to be submissive and fatalistic, but to fight for the establishment of a political, social and religious system in which man can attain his human and final destiny. Man, theology tells him, is to a large degree, the maker and shaper of his own life. The education offered in those institutions of learning planted in those minds those fermenting ideas. The Friars were Spaniards and, as Spaniards, they were carried away by the political and social blindness that affected most of their fellow Spanish contemporaries. They did not draw the necessary conclusions in practical life, like freedom, political representation, or even political independence. They opposed all these movements. Due to this fact many men of the Propaganda Movement became inimical to religion. Back in Europe they became masons. But the rejection of religion by most men of the Propaganda Movement is a similar reaction to the rejection of Western Christian Heritage by the new Western civilization. It was a rejection of a religion that had shaped their lives. We can detect here a kind of a love-hate relationship. It is a kind of coming of age and attaining independence from the tutelage of the one who brought them to that historical stage.

The Mexican Experience

Religion had planted the seed of independence and freedom. Christianity is not only theologically but also socially speaking a liberating force. We only need to remember the monk Martin Luther, the father of German nationalism. In order to understand the birth of nationhood in the Philippines we have to turn our eyes to Mexico and the Spanish possessions in America. For over two centuries Mexico was the lifeblood of the Philippines. Mexico was the mother colony of the Philippines. Many of the products and plants alien to the Philippines came from Mexico. The galleon plying the route from Mexico—Acapulco to Manila and vice-versa did not only bring soldiers, friars, administrators and silver but many of the ideas that were becoming prevalent in the Spanish-American colonies. By the beginning of the XIX century, after the impact of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars, liberal ideas became triumphant in America. The

Philippines was a far away colony but slowly, with the new political, economic and social changes that were taking place in America, the Philippines also felt that influence. Mexican independence from Spain was started by priests. Father Miguel Hidalgo, parish priest of a small place called Dolores, started the struggle for independence in Mexico. His *grito de Dolores*, (cry of Dolores) anteceded by less than a century the *Grito de Balintawak*, (cry of Balintawak) of the plebeian Bonifacio. Father Hidalgo rallied behind him the oppressed Mexicans and all shouted against the political rule of the Spaniards. He was captured by the Spaniards and executed. The flag for freedom, unfurled by him, was picked up by another priest, father Morelos. He too was captured by the Spaniards and executed. But the movement started by them did not die. The peoples under Spain in America had become conscious that they were different from the Spaniards. They asked for independence. Since independence was not granted to them they valiantly fought for it. Fathers Hidalgo and Morelos were priests and patriots. They were also fighters for freedom and independence and served as an inspiration to the rest of the American colonies. Without being unfaithful to their priestly duties, they realized perhaps more acutely than their fellow Mexicans, that their people ought to be free and politically independent from their mother country: Spain. The battle cry against the Spaniards in Mexico was: 'Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe and death to the Spaniards'. It was a motto for religion and for political freedom.

*The Secularization and Filipinization dispute in
the Philippines*

We have to give a brief account of the secularization of parishes in the Philippines in order to understand the struggle for Philippine independence from Spain in the second half of the XIX century. One of the most serious flaws of Spain and the Friars in the Philippines was the denial to Filipino secular priests to become parish priests. The problem was an old one when it flared up in the XIX century. But it was an explosive one. Many Spanish Friars were sincerely convinced that Filipino priests were not fit to take charge of parishes. Their hostile attitude was based, for many of them, on scruples of conscience. They

thought Filipinos were not fit for responsible posts in the Church. One exaggerated case is the one of the Agustinian Friar Gaspar of San Agustin. He voiced the sentiments of most of his fellow friars and countrymen when he wrote a derogatory letter against Filipinos becoming priests.¹⁰

In 1767 bishop Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufina came to the Philippines. As soon as he came he attempted to enforce episcopal visitation on the parishes administered by Friars. They opposed him. As a retaliation he ousted many of them from their parishes. He was forced to look for substitutes. Archbishop Sancho was also confronted with the need to fill the parishes left vacant by the Jesuits after their expulsion from the Philippines and the Spanish dominions in 1768. Given this severe lack of priests he ordained many Filipino priests and put them in charge of the parishes abandoned by the Friars. He did not prepare them intellectually and morally for the new responsible jobs. He ordained them hurriedly and was not careful about their selection. Lacking the moral and intellectual formation necessary for the exercise of their ministry many of them gave a bad account of themselves. People were scandalized by their ignorance and licentiousness. A saying became popular in Manila: "There were no oarsmen to be found for the coastal vessels, because the archbishop had ordained them all".¹¹ The archbishop himself lamented his policy and changed his mind later on. The evil was done and a severe blow had been given to the growth of Filipino clergy.¹² This convinced the Friars and the Spaniards that the Filipinos could not be given charge of the parishes. As the years went by some of the parishes were vacated by Filipino priests and taken over by Friars.

In the eighteenth century most of the Friars believed in conscience that the Filipinos were not fit to become parish priests.

¹⁰ San Agustin's Letter is found in JUAN DELGADO, S.J., *Historia Sacro-Profana, politica y natural de las Islas del Poniente llamadas Filipinas*, Manila, 1892.

For the development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines see H. DE LA COSTA, S.J., "The Development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines", in *Theological Studies*, VIII, June, 1947, pp. 219-50. An expanded version of the same article is found in *The Filipino Clergy: Historical Studies and Future Perspectives*, Loyola Papers 12, Manila, 1979, 16-59.

¹¹ DE LA COSTA, *Theological Studies*, VIII, pp. 242.

¹² For the archbishop's confession of failure see his *Pastoral Letter of June 11, 1772*, in FERRANDO-FONSECA, O.P., *Historia de los PP. Dominicos en las Islas Filipinas*, (6 vols.), Madrid, 1870-1872, vol. V, pp. 54-59.

During the XIX century many Filipinos were highly educated and morally and spiritually of a high sensibility. The Friars were manipulated by the Spanish colonial government. In the face of rising Filipino nationalism Filipino priests as parish priests were considered a danger to Spain. They might become the first and foremost exponents of nationalism. The Spanish government had the Mexican experience whose priests had led the intellectual struggle for independence. The Friars, manipulated by the colonial government, went along with the policy dictated by the Spanish rulers.

The dispute over secularization, then, was becoming a dispute of Filipinization. This was dangerous. It reached its peak in 1861 when the Spanish government ordered the replacement of the Recollect missionaries in Mindanao by the Jesuits, former workers in this mission field before their expulsion in 1768. The Recollects were given several parishes of Cavite administered by the secular Filipino clergy. Father Pelaez, governor of the diocese of Manila as the seat was vacant, warned of the serious dangers involved.¹³ He was not listened to. *The Filipino* secular priests had to give way to *Spanish* Friars. What had been and was a fundamentally ecclesiastical problem and an intra-church dispute between secular and regular clergy over the parishes became a racial and nationalistic one. The Friars were becoming blind to the new times. The archbishop of Manila, Meliton Martinez, exposed the seriousness of the problem to the highest authorities in Spain. He exposed to them the risks involved in giving the parishes to the Friars and taking them away from the Filipino secular priests. He was of the opinion that the Filipino secular priests were faithful servants of Spain and the Church. They felt insulted by the Spanish authorities. The bishop again was overruled by Spanish authorities. The problem, then, grew in intensity as the years went by. The nationalistic fervor grew more and more. Father Pelaez died in the earthquake of 1863, but other priests continued the struggle for the secularization of parishes.

¹³ A manuscript copy of his letter is found in the Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomas (AUST), Folletos 108, pp. 502-504.

*Priests and Patriots: The martyrdom of
Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora*

The seeds of nationalism, planted by Filipino secular priests, continued to take root in the hearts and minds of the Filipinos. On January 20, 1872 some Filipino workers and a marine detachment revolted in Cavite against the Spanish authorities. The revolt was immediately crushed, but the Spanish authorities accused some Filipino secular priests as instigators and leaders of the revolt. The most prominent among the accused were Fathers Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora. After a quick trial by a military court they were condemned to death. They were executed by garroting at the field of Bagumbayan, Luneta, Manila, on 17 of February, 1872. A large multitude of Filipinos gathered at the Luneta to witness the execution. The hearts of the Filipinos bled profusely at seeing the lifeless bodies of the three priests. This shows that they felt like Filipinos. It manifests a deep sense of nationhood. The fatherland was crying. Part of their own selves was also dying on that tragic day. How did this sense of nationhood come about? Did the hearts of the Bisayans also bleed at seeing Sulaiman's fort in Manila rapidly desintegrate in flames in 1570? The Philippines, by the time of the execution of *Gomburza*, had become a nation. The Tagalogs, Bikolanos, Bisayans, Pampangos and others felt as men of one nation and not anymore of one region. The Filipinos felt insulted by the execution of the three priests. Ever since then they have been revered as martyrs for the cause of the nation. Their deaths meant the beginning of a permanent struggle for political independence and freedom. The impression left upon the hearts and minds of the Filipinos was everlasting. It helped to give Filipino nationalism a new sense of direction. Rizal, years later, during the height of the Propaganda Movement, dedicated his famous novel *El Filibusterismo* to the memory of the three martyred priests. According to him the Philippines worshipped their memory. Rizal wrote:

"Without 1872 there would today be no Plaridel or Jaena or Sanciango, and those brave and generous colonies of Filipinos in Europe would not exist. Without 1872 Rizal would today be a Jesuit and instead of writing the *Noli Me Tangere* would have written something quite

different. The sight of such injustice and cruelty aroused my imagination even as a boy and I swore to dedicate myself to the task of some day avenging the fate of these victims".¹⁴

From the Propaganda Movement to the Revolution

The death of the three priests did not put a stop to the search for political identity and independence. Rather it became a point of departure. The execution of the three priests alienated many Filipinos from Spain and from the Church. The suspicion grew among the Filipinos that the three priests had been executed for being Filipinos. This conferred a secularistic and anti-clerical trend to the whole movement for independence. The successors of the movement after the disappearance of the three priests, in their search and struggle for justice and independence, colored their writings with bitter attacks against the Church. The discontented Filipinos now had, as one of their main targets, the abuses of the Friars and their entrenchment in their privileged status. Picking up the spirit of European liberalism of the XIX century, which was permeated by a spirit of rejection of the Christian heritage, they ridiculed and attacked the work of the Church during their own times, projecting that anti-clerical view into the past history of the Church in the Philippines. This was unfortunate. The educated classes, the wealthy and the middle class started to ask for reforms, because they felt and were treated as second class citizens. Still worse, oftentimes, they were denied basic rights in their own country.

The main protagonists of the Propaganda Movement were not radical revolutionaries. Rizal, Lopez Jaena, M. H. del Pilar and others asked for representation in the Spanish Cortes and Parliament. They hoped that Spanish authorities in the peninsula would listen to their demands. These demands were limited to the acceptance of Filipino people as equal to the Spaniards. The Philippines should be made a Province of Spain and not be kept as a colony. Many of them, even before their departure for Europe, in search for a more liberal education, were influenced by the current democratic trends of Europe. They were children of wealthy Filipinos, mestizo and Chinese families. Many of them

¹⁴ *Letter of Jose Rizal to Mariano Ponce*, April 18, 1889, *Epistolario Rizalino*, ed. T. M. Kalaw (Manila, 1931), II, p. 166.

belonged to the middle class, for the economic changes instituted by some Spanish governors at the end of the XVIII century and the opening of the Philippines to international trade brought about the birth of a powerful middle class. Manila offered them the possibility of a university education. Many of these students, dissatisfied with the methods of their professors, and eager for a more liberal education, set out for Europe. Once in Europe they started to organize themselves and fight for the cause of their country. They wanted to bring to the notice of the Spaniards the conditions of the Philippines. In order to impress them they exaggerated the defects and abuses of the colonial authorities in the Philippines. In order to get moral and intellectual support they came into contact with masons. Masonry in Spain during the XIX century was anti-clerical and anti-Christian. Many of these Filipino *ilustrados* living in Madrid and Barcelona were initiated into the rites of masonry. The Propaganda Movement was definitely anti-clerical. Back in the Philippines their struggle for justice and independence became paramount. But the best instrument to do so was to ridicule the Friars, attack them, exaggerate their defects. They were presented as responsible for all the evils of society. They cultivated a certain hatred against the Spanish Friars. In this the Propaganda Movement, a Western creation, is heir to anti-clerical and anti-Christian culture born in Europe after the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Slowly but steadily many of the *ilustrados* drifted away from the Church and from Christianity.

In an age of reason, when faith was discredited, in an age of exaggerated optimism, man believed only in his own powers and his own perfectibility. Any man who stood as a testimony of a different life, a witness to a supernatural life, had to be rejected, ridiculed, mocked and vilified. Such were the Friars of the Philippines. This does not mean that the Friars had no defects. Many of the complaints were serious and real. The greatest fault of the Friars was the failure to see that things had enormously changed in the Philippines. They were blind to the new realities, especially in their inability to see the fact that the Filipinos were not Spaniards and did not want to be Spaniards but Filipinos. They denied to the Filipinos the right to rule their own lives, according to a political system chosen by them. In one word: they were reactionaries from the political point of view.

As for their vices, economic exploitations, all those have been grossly exaggerated by the Reformers of the Propaganda Movement. The myth still continues today.

Since the Propagandists were not listened to in their moderate demands for reforms many of them became more radical. The Propaganda Movement, which had spearheaded the struggle for political representation and economic and educational reforms, gave way to more radical movements. The most famous of them, and the one to really appeal to the masses, was the Katipunan. This movement was founded by Andres Bonifacio, a poor man of Tondo, a *tao*. The call was now for revolution and final political independence from Spain. Insurrection was the only possibility left open for them. Thus Bonifacio, with some other collaborators, started to organize the Katipunan, to explain to their new members the need to prepare themselves for the struggle. In the end the Philippines would finally become a free nation.

The story of the Katipunan, the outbreak of the Revolution, the war of independence, the defeat of Spain and the coming of America to the Philippines are interesting topics to deal with, but they are outside our study. When Bonifacio raised his *Cry of Balintawak* in 1896 the Filipinos rallied behind him. The rebellion that started among the Tagalogs found an echo among the rest of the Filipinos all over the archipelago, except the pagan tribes of the Mountain Province and the Moslems in Mindanao. The Philippines had reached political and social maturity. Spain did not want to recognize this fact and fought the rebels. She was wrong. Having done so much in the course of her stay in the Philippines, at the end she lacked the foresight and wisdom to accept the new political and social realities. Since she resisted and was defeated, a sense of hatred against her fruitful and laborious work was developed among the Filipinos. A hatred that has not yet entirely died down.

The Spanish conquest and evangelization brought about by Spain and the Spanish Friars is not a perfect realization. It could not be. The Spaniards were men and not angels. As men they were bound to fail and indeed they failed oftentimes. Many black points still remain to be explained. Not the least is the failure to train a local clergy, together with the execution of

Gomburza (Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora) and the lack of political representation in the Spanish Parliament.

But on the whole, Spanish history in the Philippines is positive. Spanish contributions in the fields of government, education, trade and commerce, agriculture, political unity and nationalism are outstanding.

The work of Spain and her missionaries in the Philippines does not stand or fall on the many concrete injustices that a modern Filipino can pinpoint throughout the three hundred years of Hispanic history in the Philippines. Rather it stands or falls on those basic historical factors that we have studied before.

Challenges to Spanish Rule: The Revolts

Let us now touch briefly on the revolts during the Spanish period. To picture the Spanish period as a continuous struggle against Spain is a historical misconception. Historians are tempted to describe Hispanic-Philippine history as bloody and war-like. For some writers, ever since Lapulapu resisted and defeated Magellan in 1521 up to Bonifacio's cry of Balintawak in 1896, the whole history is a continuous succession of revolts and risings against the Spanish foreign invaders. This does not conform to the historical truth. We do not want to deny the fact of those revolts, nor do we want to minimize their importance. There were many uprisings. All of them, however, were local and regional in character. The causes were varied. Some of them were due to religion. Most of them find their explanation in social injustices, economic exploitation or the crushing demands of Spanish authorities during times of national crisis. Some uprisings are due to both religious and social reasons.

The religious risings can be understood from the psychological point of view. According to the psychology of religion, man tries to remain faithful to his ancestors' religion. However primitive that religion might be, still it is one's own religion, a family religion, handed down by the ancestors from generation to generation. Human instinct, which is self-preserving, tends to identify itself with the ancestors' religious past. Furthermore, in primitive societies, religion seems to be inextricably interwoven with culture. Religion is culture. Culture is religion. It demands courage to reject one's own religion, even if it is pagan

or animistic. It is a type of self-denial, or self-rejection for something else come from outside.

It is a typical case of resistance to religious change. In the Philippines it was a challenge to the new religious order being established by the missionaries and the Church. After the novelty of Christianity had passed away, and its moral-behavioristic implications were weighed in the scales of commitment, some Filipino pagan priests returned again to their ancestors' religion. Native religions made a strong claim and gained the upper hand. This was a challenge not to the fanaticism of the missionaries, but to Christianity. Going to a deeper psychological level, it was a rejection of something which was strange and alien to them. The new religion had not yet become inbedded in their lives and culture, so it had to be rejected. Oftentimes, these pagan priests had become Christians. Towards the end of their lives, as they were confronted with the tremendous finality of death and the after-life, they returned to their former religion, which seemed to offer them greater security and joy in facing their final end.

The Conspiracy of 1587-1588

The first Filipino attempt at shaking off Spanish power came in 1587-88. This attempt is connected with the struggle against slavery carried on by the early Spanish missionaries, supported by the Spanish Crown. The *datus* and chieftains could not see with peaceful eyes the efforts of the missionaries to liberate their slaves. Possession of slaves meant power and wealth. The *datus* and *principales* were inimical to this libertarian movement. They saw themselves devoid of any political power, and now deprived, too, of their slaves who were applying to the governor and courts to obtain their freedom. They resolved to strike against the Spaniards.¹⁵ helped by the rulers of Borneo, Brunei, Mindanao and Jolo. The plot was discovered and the main pro-

¹⁵ "... They resolved to act in harmony and with one mind in everything. If their slaves demanded liberty, they were to help one another against them; for already they were not regarded or obeyed as before. They possessed neither slaves nor gold, and found themselves poor and cast down, ready to go to prison any day. Their sorrow was very keen because their wives were taken away from them and given to others whom, they claimed, they had been first married. For all these reasons, they were very sad, and discussed and took oath, according to their custom, that if any enemy came to Manila to attack the Spaniards, they would unanimously and with one mind aid the enemy against the Spaniards. Thus they would once more become masters, as they had been before, and exercise the old tyranny over

tagonists were brought to trial. Some of them were executed. Some others sent to exile to Mexico. Many of them, however, even those heavily involved, were fined and imprisoned for a short time. Others were acquitted.

This plot was not a popular rising against the foreign invader but an attempt on the part of the *datus* and chiefs, the ruling class, to regain their lost privileges. This attempt shows that the conspirators were strangers to the Filipinos. Their roots were in Borneo. In Manila they were conquerors. Their ties, both political and religious, were with the rulers of Borneo and not with the people of the Philippines, of Manila or surrounding areas. These rulers were basically Borneans, late comers to Manila. Their effort to shake off Spanish dominion was not an attempt to defend their people and nation against the colonialist power but rather a desperate effort to expel the Spaniards and regain their power over the Filipinos. They were "not obeyed as before", "they had no slaves". They wanted to become masters, as they had been before, and exercise their old tyranny over the common people. This is what a great filipinologist has to say:

"It was good for the country that the plans of the plotters were not fulfilled. What they hoped to accomplish was to restore the old regime, that is, to restore slavery for their benefit. Spain had abolished slavery. For the Filipino people Spanish tyranny was more tolerable than that of the *datus*".¹⁶

The *datus* were afraid to loose the privileges which they had acquired quite recently when, having come from Borneo, they had established themselves in Manila and neighboring provinces. They failed not because their plot was discovered by the Spaniards but rather because the ordinary people remained alien to the plot. The expected help had to come from abroad, from Borneo and Brunei, since the masses of Manila and Luzon would not collaborate with them. They could not because they had been conquered by them a few decades before. It reveals no doubt the consciousness that these rulers faced a common enemy, the Spaniards, who as conquerors had destroyed their lordship over

the common people who now were very much favored by the Spaniards, being promoted to superior places by them", *Conspiracy against the Spaniards*, in BLAIR-ROBERTSON, Vol. VII, p. 101.

¹⁶ W. E. RETANA (ed.), ANTONIO MORGA, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, Madrid, 1909, p. 406.

the ordinary people of Manila and beyond. But the people, the masses, the common *tao* of Manila and neighboring provinces had a different view altogether, since these rulers were total strangers to them. The people not only remained alien to the plot but denied them any support. It was a typical rising of the oligarchs resentful of losing their privileged status. The ordinary people played no part in the plot and gave no support. To have done so would have meant to arrest the movement for their own freedom that was gaining momentum as the years went by. De la Costa, the eminent Filipino historian, succinctly and eloquently gives us the reason for the failure of the rising:

"... The leaders, taken by surprise, were rounded up, tried, and sentenced promptly and ruthlessly. There was little of the law's delay on this occasion ..."

"... The lesser datus involved in the conspiracy were banished to Mexico. The land of the Tagalogs lay quiet; none of the villages moved to save their former lords. For this was a conspiracy of maharlika, nor a people's rebellion. That would not come until centuries later, when a warehouse worker would gather a handful of farm hands about him and raise the cry of Balintawak".¹⁷

The above description throws also a tremendous light on another aspect and proves the emergence of a new civilization created by the Church and Spain. The chiefs not only protested that their slaves were taken away, that they were not obeyed and respected as before, but "their sorrow was very keen because their wives were taken away from them and given to others to whom, they claimed they had first been married".¹⁸ Here is a proof of the application of Christian laws regarding marriage. Since these chiefs were polygamists they had more than one wife, according perhaps to their economic means to maintain them. With the coming of the Spaniards the people were asked to have only one wife. The others had to be given away. Thus the Christian institution of marriage, with the emphasis on monogamy and indissolubility, was fast gaining ground. The aristocracy, mainly coming from Borneo and greatly influenced by Moslem laws and customs, felt bitter about the new dispositions of the Spanish laws, for they meant for them the termination of their privileges as a dominant class and the break of their class privileges over

¹⁷ H. DE LA COSTA, S.J., *The Jesuits in the Philippines*, pp. 115-116.

¹⁸ *Conspiracy against the Spaniards*, in BLAIR-ROBERTSON, Vol. VII, p. 101.

the rest of the people. It is in this context that the attempt to shake off Spanish rule has to be interpreted and understood.

Religious and Social Revolts

A typical example of a religious revolt and a repudiation of Christianity happened in Bohol in 1621. A pagan priest under the name of Tamblot organized the resistance and succeeded in creating a separatist religious movement. In 1622 the revolt was crushed with the help of Cebuans.¹⁹

This religious revolt spread to Leyte. Here it took a turn towards rejection of Spanish power and Christian religion. The revolt was led by an aged chieftain, called Bankawa, a friend of Legaspi during the conquest days and a convert to Christianity. In his old age he apostatized and returned to the religion of his ancestors. The revolt was easily crushed.²⁰

A typical case of both religious and social causes leading to revolt happened in Samar in 1649. This revolt was headed by Juan Ponce Sumoroy. He was a Christian, commanding the fort of Palapag, Samar. In the course of time he took a second wife. The Jesuit missionary, Father Miguel Ponce, entreated him to abandon his adulterous relationship. As he did not listen, the woman was forcefully taken away from him. Although he was in the wrong, he raged inwardly. It was at this juncture that the Spanish authorities from Manila, to relieve the Tagalog and Pampango provinces from the crushing demands of draft labor for the shipyard of Cavite, decided to get the necessary manpower from the Visayan Islands. The Spanish authorities envisioned to get only one male from each village, which did not seem to be too much, but to the Visayans, the order was too heavy. They disliked the plan. For them Cavite was at the other end of the world. They were afraid to be far from their families and homelands. The missionaries advised against it and warned the government of the possible consequences. This gave Sumoroy the chance to get even. He gathered a large following. The first

¹⁹ Cfr. J. L. PHELAN, *The Hispanization of the Philippines. Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1567-1709*, Wisconsin, 1959, pp. 147-148. Cfr. MURILLO VELARDE, *Historia*, pp. 17-18; CONCEPCION, *Historia*, V, 20-28; JUAN DE MEDINA, *Historia*, 226-228; C. DIAZ, *Conquistas*, 132-136.

²⁰ Cfr. J. L. PHELAN, *op. cit.*, p. 148. The sources are found in the authors quoted in previous footnote.

thing he did was to settle accounts with Father Miguel Ponce. Sumoroy knocked at the mission door of Palapag on the night of June 1, 1649, at around eight o'clock. Without saying a word, and without any warning, he transfixed Father Ponce with his spear. He and his companions fled to the hills from where the revolt spread to Samar, Masbate, Bohol, Camiguin, Cebu and parts of Mindanao. The main core of the insurrection was in Samar. For a year he resisted until July of 1650 when his own people cut off his head and presented it to their pursuers. Although the revolt was put down with severity, the people won the struggle. The Spanish governor revoked the order. The Bisayans were left in peace and no draft labor was imposed on them. The burden continued to be shouldered by the Pampango and Tagalog provinces.²¹

The longest revolt in the history of the Philippines was started by Dagohoy in Bohol. In 1744 Dagohoy and 3000 followers fled to the mountains. From there they resisted for many years all expeditions sent against them. It was only in 1829, eighty-five years after the beginning of the uprising, that the rebels submitted. The descendants numbered more than 20,000 people. The governor general Ricafort granted a total pardon to them and allowed them to settle in new villages in the lowlands. Thus this long and peculiar kind of revolt came to an end.²²

One of the most serious uprisings against Spain happened in Pampanga in 1660-1661. From here it spread to Pangasinan and the Ilokos region. The Pampangans had been the most faithful subjects of Spain. The Spanish King, Philip IV, in 1632 and 1642 instructed the provincial governors, *alcaldes mayores*, to thank the Pampangos, Tagalogs, and Bikolanos for their fidelity to Spain when Holland was challenging Spanish power in the Philippines.²³ Many of them had seen service in the Spanish army and had served with high fidelity and great bravery. The Spaniards had a high admiration for their bravery and courage. The Pampangans could not bear anymore the intolerable burdens imposed upon them by the Spanish colonial government. Through-

²¹ For a scholarly and detailed description of Sumoroy's revolt see DE LA COSTA, *The Jesuits*, pp. 411-413; Cfr. J. L. PHELAN, *op. cit.* p. 148; CONCEPCION, *Historia*, VI, 247-281; DIAZ, *Conquistas*, 518-523.

²² Cfr. J. L. PHELAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-149.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 145; Cfr. BLAIR-ROBERTSON, XXV, 148-149; XXXV, 125-126

out the Hispanic-Dutch war (1600-1645) and up to the time of the uprising the Pampangos had been used and abused by Spanish authorities. Unable to tolerate it any longer they revolted. This was a social uprising. The rebels decided to cut out supplies to Manila and threatened the very life of the city. The Philippines had at that time one of the most capable governors, a military man and a very resourceful person: governor Manrique de Lara. He directly negotiated with the leaders. A small military expedition, full pardon to all the rebels, payment to the Pampangos of 14,000 pesos as an initial installment of the 200,000 the government owed them and solemn promise to ameliorate their working conditions in cutting the timber for the galleons brought the rebellion to a quick and peaceful agreement.²⁴ The Pampangos were not against Spain and the colonial rule, for many of their leaders shared in the power of the government at a local and military level. They protested against the harsh conditions and the burdens imposed upon them. The Pampangos won in their grievances. Spain granted them what she did not grant to any other ethnic group in the Philippines: to patrol the city of Manila, to garrison most of the military forts in the Islands and to have a strong and disciplined Pampangan constabulary which continued throughout the Spanish period until they lead the Americans to Palanan to capture Aguinaldo in 1902.

The revolts in Pangasinan and Ilokos took an anti-Spanish character. The leaders Malong in Pangasinan and Almazan in Ilokos proclaimed themselves "Kings" and asserted their native-ness. A number of priests were killed and some churches looted. But the revolts soon died down and the Ilokos and Pangasinan did not rise up again until 1762-1764, during the British occupation of Manila when Diego Silang and Juan de la Cruz Palaris challenged Spanish rule.

Conclusion

Why did these revolts fail? These revolts were not a failure as such for the Spanish authorities generally listened to their demands. The rebels got what they wanted and conditions

²⁴ Sources for this revolt are found in C. DIAZ, *Conquistas*, 568-590; MURILLO VELARDE, *Historia*, 254-256; BALASAR DE SANTA CRUZ, *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de Filipinas, Japon y China*, 1693, 331-334; CONCEPCION, *Historia*, VII, 9-35; Cfr. DE LA COSTA, *op. cit.* Cfr. J. L. PHELAN, *op. cit.*, 146.

improved after each revolt. They did fail as *national movements* for the causes leading to revolt were local grievances, oftentimes abuse of tributes. Lacking still national consciousness, which did not come until the XIX century, they were put out by Filipinos and Spaniards together. There was no deliberate Spanish policy to play one ethnic group against the other, but when a revolt broke out in one place, people of another region were usually used. There was never any bloodbath. Most of the revolts ended with a general amnesty granted by the Spanish authorities. Phelan finds the reason for this in the mediatory role played by the Friars. He writes:

"The regular clergy played a key role. Some religious did loose their lives in the various uprisings. For this reason the clergy as a group were tireless in their efforts to pacify a recently revolted area. Their intervention usually secured a general amnesty, with the death penalty confined to a few leaders. The fact that more did not break out may be traced to the appeal and authority the religious exercised over their parishioners".²⁵

To picture the role of the Friars as stagnating and killing the just aspirations of the people is a historical misconception. Had it not been for their role, the Spaniards, pressed by rebels inside and the permanent threats of the Dutch and Moslems from outside, might have been seized with panic and resorted to inhuman measures. The very survival of the Filipinos as a people might have been at stake as it happened to natives in Australia and New Zealand. The role of the Friars was pivotal and extremely beneficial to the Filipinos.

We understand the feeling of modern Filipino historians who picture the leaders of those revolts as national heroes. For them they are fore-runners of modern Philippine nationalism and independence. We have to wait until the XIX century, however, to detect a national consciousness, though those revolts helped to crystalize, at a regional level, some nativistic sentiments. On the whole, we have to consider Spanish-Philippine history as peaceful and fruitful. Historians speak of a *pax hispanica*. Those revolts, real and bloody as they were, are small events in the general trend of historical progression during the Spanish era. The Spanish era, contrary to the general opinion prevalent among

²⁵ Cfr. J. L. PHELAN, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

many Filipino historians, is permeated by a long reign of peace and tranquility. Thus we read in Phelan:

“Understandably enough, the leaders of these early revolts have been enshrined in the pantheon of modern Philippine nationalism as heroic precursors of independence. It should be realized, however, that none of these leaders was guided by an outlook that could be called even remotely Pan-Philippine. These revolts were local uprisings executed as protests against local grievances. It took two hundred and fifty years of the *pax hispanica* before a Philippine national consciousness could become articulate. The Spanish contribution toward the formation of the modern Philippine nation was substantial. The *pax hispanica* created conditions of law and order throughout the maritime provinces of Luzon and the Bisayas, Spanish forms of political organization spread, and Catholicism gave the Filipinos a new kind of spiritual and cultural unity. Nevertheless, if the Spanish contribution should not be overlooked, neither should the role of the Filipinos be underestimated. Their capacity for creative social adjustment to new cultural stimuli has been amply demonstrated. They selectively adopted rather than arbitrarily adopted Spanish forms to old patterns. If the Filipino revere the leaders of the early revolts as the precursors of the modern nation, they should not disparage the laborious if undramatic efforts of those Filipinos in the seventeenth century who were confronted with the difficult task of synthesizing Hispanic and indigenous elements into somewhat harmonious whole. The modern Philippine nation owes as much to the latter group as it does to the former”.²⁶

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²⁶ *Ibidem*, *op. cit.*, 151-152.