

## José Rizal and the Challenge Of Philippines Independence

by John D. Morris

The story of the Philippines' national hero, Dr. José Rizal, and his family, is representative of the courageous spirit and moral intellect, the sublime quality of leadership, that makes possible the emergence of an independent nation from colonized, disunited, or economically looted territories. Rizal's life and works, like those of Mohandas Ghandi and Rabindranath Tagore in India, and Sun Yat-sen in China, catalyzed anti-colonial politics in Asia during the latter years of the 19th Century. José Rizal is rightly referred to as "the First Filipino," and to this day, he stands as a challenge to his countrymen still struggling to overcome the legacy of four centuries of Spanish imperialism and 100 years of American occupation and control.

Rizal can be classed as a universal genius. He dedicated himself to the education of his countrymen. In pursuit of this task, he mastered languages, wrote poetry, and investigated many scientific fields outside of his formal training as an ophthalmic surgeon. He travelled widely, wrote extensively on many subjects, and even translated Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell* and Hans Christian Andersen's *Fairy Tales* into Tagalog, a native language of the Philippines. His crowning achievement would be the two novels that he wrote while in Europe. These Spanish texts, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El filibusterismo*, would unleash a series of incidents which would overthrow Spanish occupation, and lead to the recognition of the Philippines as a nation.

However, the singular act of Rizal that gave birth to this new nation, was his martyred death.

### Rizal and the Spanish Legacy

In 1521, when Spanish ships led by Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan arrived in the Philippine Archipelago, they met a peaceful and friendly population that had skill in shipbuilding, agriculture, mining, and textiles. Trade was

being transacted with Japan, China, and other parts of the South Pacific, and a system of weights and measures governed their relations. However, the region soon to be known as the Philippines was not a nation. There were people of related language cultures—Tagalogs, Bisayans, Pampangos, Ilokanos, Bikolanos, and others—who came to call themselves Filipinos, but this was only to denote their geographical origin, not any "national" loyalty.

The process of colonialization of the Philippines in the wake of Spanish conquest in 1542, and the introduction of European culture and religion, had its blessings and curses. There was occupation and oppression, but also dialogue and development. Paradoxically, it would be Spain's provincial and religious administration that created the potential for a nation. Relations between Spain and the Philippines made the latter an Asian aspect of the European battle, instigated in Italy at the Council of Florence in 1439, to establish the principle of a sovereign nation. Thus, the humanist traditions of the Italian Renaissance began to take root in the Philippines, despite the oppressive aspects of Spanish colonial rule. This would be the basis of the Filipinos' subsequent struggle against the international feudal financial oligarchy, to which they made a profound contribution.

The stage for this drama, that was to unfold in the Philippines during the second half of the 19th Century, was set in the bloody struggle for power in Europe in the wake of the revolutionary defeat of the British by the American colonies, and the establishment of the United States under a republican constitution. In 1812, a new Spanish constitution was framed at Cádiz, a center of liberal and anti-monarchist agitation, which attempted to define a more progressive and democratic Spain, even as Napoleon's army was being expelled from their territory. Under this constitution the Filipinos were to be represented in the Spanish Cortes, where it was hoped



*José Rizal (left), inspirer of Philippine independence, was a political leader, doctor, linguist, artist, and writer who was himself inspired by the works of the “poet of freedom,” Friedrich Schiller.*

that some of the abuses in colonial administration and church practice in the Philippines would be redressed.

Lorenzo Alberto Alonzo was one of the delegates who assembled in Manila to elect a Philippine Deputy to the Cortes in Madrid under this new Spanish constitution. Alonzo would become better known as the maternal grandfather of the man celebrated as the Philippines’ national hero, Dr. José Rizal.

At the time of Rizal’s birth in 1861, the leadership of the Manila Diocese temporarily fell, because of the death of Archbishop José Aranguren, into the hands of Father Pedro Peláez, a Spanish *mestizo* who had risen to the position of *vicar capitular*. Peláez was at the center of reformist circles within the Church, who acted to open it to more participation of native clergy, and led the fight against successive royal decrees which handed parishes over to the religious orders. The political and financial power of the Franciscan, Dominican, Augustinian, and Recollect friars would be a crucial issue in the life of Rizal.

Rizal’s family, the Alonzo y Mercado, were in a unique position to play a role in this struggle. His parents were of Malay and Chinese heritage, and both sides of the family were wealthy and well educated. Their home in Calamba, Laguna Province, contained one of the largest private libraries in the Philippines. They socialized with the leading members of society, and sent their sons to the best schools.

In 1872, the crisis in the country came to a head. A mutiny of native soldiers at the Cavite Barracks, 30 miles from Manila, precipitated a national crackdown on the leaders of the reform movement. Dozens of activists and businessmen were exiled from the country, and three priests, Fathers José Burgos

(a pupil of Father Peláez), Mariano Gómez, and Jacinto Zamora, were subjected to a show trial, found guilty, and executed publicly by garrote in the fields near Manila. This injustice had a personal impact on the Mercado y Alonzo family, because their eldest son, Paciano, was a student of Father Burgos at the prominent Jesuit Ateneo school in Manila.

Right on the heels of this event, Rizal witnessed his mother and uncle become the victims of legal vengeance. The vindictive wife of his uncle succeeded in pressing charges which alleged that they were plotting to kill her. A corrupt prosecution led to them being incarcerated for two and one-half years. Such was the character of the courts and society dominated by an increasingly desperate Spanish chauvinist elite.

### **The Path to Confrontation**

When young José himself left home to attend the Ateneo in Manila, he was a physically slight, but mentally precocious child. His brother insisted that he adopt the name Rizal in order to avoid the obvious stigma that the Alonzo y Mercado name had received from Paciano’s association with Father Burgos, and the family’s prominence in the native community. Despite this precaution, Rizal was a living challenge to the illusions of Spanish racial superiority that dominated the minds of the Spanish colonials. Imbued with scripture by his devout mother, and a love for Tagalog poetry and song, Rizal excelled in his studies, and cast the mold of intellectual independence and nationalism that would lead him on the path to confrontation with the Catholic Church and the Spanish establishment.

Of this period in 1879, Rizal wrote, “My second year as a boarder [1876-77] was like the first, except that in that time there had been a great development of my patriotic sentiments, as well as an acute quickness of perception.”

In the following year, 1878, his poem, “A la juventud filipina,” took the prize offered in Manila for the best poem by an Indio or mestizo.

Rizal went on to study at the Dominican University of St. Thomas, but his studies suffered as he became politically isolated by adversaries among the faculty and clergy who demanded that he assimilate to their system. In a similar way, his older brother, Paciano, was denied a degree from the same school. The brothers decided that the only path left to José was to continue his studies in Spain—advice that echoed the suggestion of Father Burgos that intelligent Filipinos pursue their education abroad. Without the consent of his parents, whose condemnation he feared, Rizal accepted the sponsorship of his brother and uncle to relocate in Europe. The relationship between Paciano and José, where the elder brother committed himself to take care of the family while Rizal furthered his education and dedicated his life to his country’s cause, reflected a conscious patriotic conspiracy to advance a republican movement in the Philippines.

### ‘Filibusterismo’

Once in Spain, Rizal studied ophthalmic medicine at the Central University of Madrid, inspired to do so by his mother’s loss of sight due to cataracts. Additionally, he pursued a degree in Philosophy and Letters, and studied art and fencing. In the three years of study in Madrid, Rizal demonstrated himself to be an outstanding student, receiving honors in many subjects, as well as passing his medical examinations. These were accomplishments never before achieved by a Filipino, and were rare even among the European students.

Yet, Rizal never lost sight of his primary goal in Spain, which is alluded to in the first letter that he received from his brother: “To my way of thinking the principal object of your going is not to perfect yourself in this career, but in other matters of greater usefulness or, which comes to the same thing, in that to which you are most inclined.”

From the beginning of his overseas activities, Rizal became deeply involved in the political life of the Philippine expatriate community. He wrote letters to the editors of leading newspapers and contributed articles to numerous Filipino publications, advocating justice for Filipino citizens and equality in representation before the Spanish Cortes.

A movement had grown up, organized mainly by students of the Filipino colony in Spain, which became known as the Propaganda Movement. It advocated their political interests, and fought to strengthen their identity and to defend their countrymen from detraction. As early as 1869, Manuel Regidor, a Spaniard who had been born in the Philippines, wrote articles and published books demanding reform in the Philippines. Later, Gregorio Sancianco, a Madrid attorney, wrote a

book entitled *El Progreso de Filipinas*, which profiled in depth the resources, finances, administration, and economic potential of the Philippines. They were joined by many others besides Rizal. There were the writers Pedro Paterno, Graciano López Jaena, Pedro de Govantes, Marcelo Hilario del Pilar (known as Plaridel); and the artists Luna, Hidalgo, Zaragoza, and Villanueva, among others. Although they did have allies in Spain, they faced continuous claims of disloyalty to Spain. They were charged with undermining the authority of the Church and other alleged seditious activity that all came under the charge of “*filibusterismo*.”

Rizal addressed the issue of *filibusterismo* from Spain in 1884, after a period of unrest in the Philippines: “In the Philippines, all those are *filibusteros* in the towns who do not take off their hats on meeting a Spaniard, be the weather what it may; those who greet a friar and do not kiss his sweaty hand, if he is a priest, or his habit, if he is a lay-brother; those who manifest displeasure at being addressed by the familiar ‘*tú*’ by anyone and everyone, accustomed as they are to show respect and to receive it; those who are subscribers to some periodical of Spain or of Europe, even if it treat of literature, the sciences, or the fine arts; those who read books other than the novenas and fairy-stories of miracles of the girdle, the cord, or the scapular; those who in the elections of the *gobernadorcillos* vote for one who is not the candidate of the parish priest; all those, in a word, who among normal civilized people are considered good citizens, friends of progress and enlightenment in the Philippines, are *filibusteros*, enemies of order, and, like lightning rods, attract on stormy days wrath and calamities.”

### Rizal’s Exposition Medals Speech

In 1884, the Philippine community was overcome with joy as two native sons had won medals at the Madrid Exposition for their works of art. Juan Luna received a Gold Medal for his painting, “Spoliarium,” which depicts the broken bodies of gladiators being dragged out of the Roman arena. Félix Resurrección Hidalgo was given a Silver Medal for “Christian Virgins Exposed to the Mob.” At a dinner held in honor of the two painters, Rizal gave a stunning speech, which demonstrated the quality of his leadership in the Propaganda Movement.

“Spaniards and Filipinos were two peoples,” his speech started. “Two peoples that sea and space separate in vain, two peoples in which the seeds of disunion, blindly sown by men and their tyranny, do not take root.

“The patriarchal age is coming to an end in the Philippines; the illustrious deeds of the sons [of the country] are no longer accomplished within its boundaries; the Oriental chrysalis is breaking out of its sheath; brilliant colors and rosy streaks herald the dawn of a long day for those regions, and that race, plunged in lethargy during the night of its history, while the sun illuminated



*The scene of José Rizal's execution by firing squad, ordered by Spanish authorities in the field of Luneta overlooking Manila Bay on Dec. 30, 1896. Rizal's death was quickly followed by the rebellion which drove the Spanish occupying forces into two small enclaves by 1898. The Rizal Monument on the Luneta is decorated for Rizal Day, Dec. 30.*



other continents, awakes anew, shaken by the electric convulsion produced by contact with Western peoples, and demands light, life, the civilization that was once its heritage from time, thus confirming the eternal laws of constant evolution, periodic change and progress. You know this well and you glory in it; the diamonds that shone in the towns of the Philippines owe their beauty to you; she gave the uncut stones, Europe their polished facets. And all of us behold with pride, you the finished work, and we the flame, the spirit, and the raw material we have furnished. [cheers]

“The paintings of Luna and Hidalgo embodied the essence of our social, moral, and political life: humanity in severe ordeal, humanity unredeemed, reason and idealism in open struggle with prejudice, fanaticism, and injustice. . . .

“Just as a mother teaches her child to speak so as to understand his joys, his needs, his sorrow, so also Spain, as a mother, teaches her language to the Philippines, despite the opposition of those who are so short-sighted and small-minded that, making sure of the present, they cannot foresee the future, and will not weigh the consequences; like soured nurses, corrupt and corrupting, who habitually choke every legitimate sentiment and, perverting the hearts of the People, sow in them the seeds of discord whose fruit, a very wolf's bane, a very death, will be gathered by future generations. . . .

“Spain is wherever she makes her influence felt by doing good; even if her banner were to go, her memory would remain, eternal, imperishable. What can a red and yellow rag do, or guns and cannon, where love and

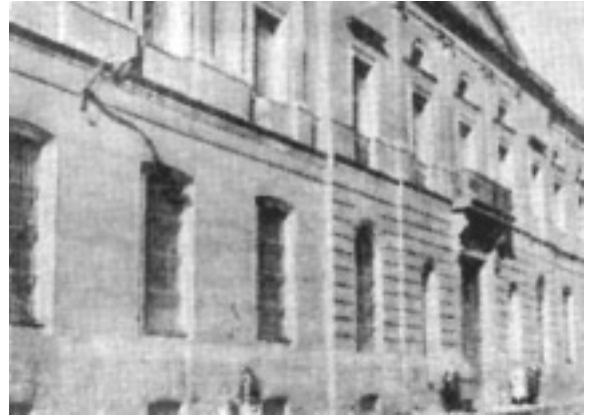
affection do not spring, where there is no meeting of the minds, no agreement on principles, no harmony of opinion? [prolonged applause].

“We have come here . . . to give tangible form to the mutual embrace between two races who love and want each other, united morally, socially, and politically for four centuries, so as to constitute in the future a single nation in spirit, duties, aspirations, privileges. [applause]

“I ask you then to drink a toast to our painters, Luna and Hidalgo, exclusive and legitimate glories of two peoples! A toast for those who have helped them on the arduous paths of art! A toast for the youth of the Philippines, sacred hope of my country, that they may follow such excellent examples. And may Mother Spain, solicitous and ever mindful of the good of her provinces, soon put in effect the reforms that she has long planned; the furrow has been plowed and the soil is not barren. A toast, finally, for the happiness of those fathers and mothers who, deprived of the affection of their sons, follow their courses with moist eyes and beating hearts from that distant land, across the seas and space, sacrificing on the altar of the common good the sweet comforts which are so few in the twilight of life, solitary and prized winter flowers blooming on the brink of the grave. [prolonged applause and cheers for the speaker]”

### **‘My Pen, the Only Tool I Had’**

Rizal's speech was immediately published in the newspapers of Madrid, and not long after in the Manila press. Rizal's



*Rizal and his older brother were both classically educated at the Jesuit Ateneo de Manila; José Rizal studied medicine, philosophy, and letters at Madrid's Universidad Central during 1882-85.*

parents and family had long worried about the effect of his thinking and ideas. After the publication of this speech in the Philippines, many doubted that he would ever be allowed to return home. An exchange of letters between Rizal, Paciano and their mother encapsulates that fear.

Paciano Rizal to his brother, Nov. 5, 1884: "At first, I thought it was only an indigestion, and I gave her a laxative hoping it would cure her; that did not happen, however, and she stayed always in bed, weak, unable to eat or sleep, so that she had lost a lot of weight after a week. I was growing very anxious about her health when I observed her sighing now and again, and then I gathered that it was a spiritual rather than a physical trouble that ailed her; I asked Saturnina [their sister] to take her to her own house to amuse her with gaming, and this having been done, she recovered.

"You were the cause of this sickness and I shall tell you why. At the time there was a great deal of talk and comment about the speech you gave at the banquet for the Filipino Painters; some said you could never return; others said that it would be better for you to stay there; still others said that you had made enemies; and there were those who said that you had also lost friends but, in brief, all were agreed that it would not be good for you to come back. These gratuitous suppositions caused our mother great sorrow and made her ill."

Teodora Alonso to her son, Dec. 11, 1884: "You really do not know how sad it makes me feel whenever I hear about you from others in conversation; that is why I ask you again and again not to meddle in things that bring grief to my heart. . . .

"Now, what I truly want from you, my son, is first of all, not to fail in your duties as a real Christian, for this is sweeter to me than your acquiring great knowledge; sometimes knowledge is what leads us to ruin. Perhaps this will be my last letter to you, so remember it well for that is what I desire most.

"Your mother who wants to take you in her arms soon, and wants you to be a good Christian."

José Rizal to his mother, early 1885:

I am doing everything possible to please you. For more than a year now, and following Father's advice, I have tried as far as possible to withdraw myself and not to call attention to my person. I have been told to stop writing; well, I have put aside my pen, the only tool I had and one which I was beginning to handle not without skill, and if sometimes I have picked it up again it was because I was compelled to do so by very powerful reasons; and even then I did not use my own name, for love of that obscurity which I need.

If in spite of this I still have enemies, well, let them be. It is so difficult to live without sorrow, but misfortunes do not mean dishonor; misfortunes are welcome when they are the result of avoiding abasement and degradation. As long as we keep the esteem of those who know us, as long as our conscience is the friendly guide of our thoughts, what does the rest matter?

We have been born into a society whose political life is so out of joint that we can have no other prospect than to submit or to perish; our conscience must decide which is to be preferred. Let us then put our trust in God and in the sincerity of our purposes. If desiring and having desired the good brings misfortune as a reward, what are we to do?

The best legacy that parents can leave to their children is an upright judgment, generosity in the exercise of our rights, and perseverance in adversity. And a son pays the greatest honor to his parents with his honesty and good name; let the son never make his father tremble with indignation or with shame, and God will provide the rest. . . .

With regard to what you tell me about my duties as a Christian, I can tell you gladly that I have not for one moment stopped believing in the fundamental principles of our religion; my childhood beliefs have yielded to the convictions of youth which in time will take root in me; essential [beliefs] which do not resist examina-

tion and time should pass into the memory and leave the heart; I should not try to live on illusions and lies. What I believe now, I believe by reasoning, because my conscience can accept only what is compatible with reason. I can bow my head before a fact even though it be inexplicable to me, so long as it is a fact, but never before an absurdity or a mere probability.

For me religion is the holiest of things, the purest, the most intangible, which escapes all human adulterations, and I think I would be recreant to my duty as a rational being if I were to prostitute my reason and admit what is absurd. I do not believe that God would punish me if I were to try to approach Him using reason and understanding, His own most precious gifts; I believe that to do Him homage, I can do no better than to present myself before Him making use of His best gifts, just as in appearing before my parents I should wear the best clothes they have given me. If someday I were to get a little of that divine spark called science, I would not hesitate to use it for God, and if I should err or go astray in my reasoning, God will not punish me.

## The Influence of Schiller

It isn't certain if Rizal's Masonic connections started at home through his mother's brother, José Alberto, but he quickly became involved in Masonic activity in Spain when he arrived in 1882. José Alberto had been in Madrid earlier during the regency of General Prim that ruled Spain after the abdication of Queen Isabel in 1868. He had been a friend of the General, and often recalled Prim's wisdom in advocating a constitutional monarchy as a step towards a Spanish republic. The philosophical war that Rizal came to represent was not new, and because of the dangers of confronting the oligarchical powers within the Spanish church and state, which were often unified in their efforts to suppress dissent, it should not be surprising that his circles were engaged in fraternal and clandestine associations. Besides individuals that were known to him for their scholarly or financial connections to the Philippines, these Masonic relations led Rizal to contacting other leading scientific and republican leaders of Europe, many who also shared the common paradox of being Catholic Masons.

These republican networks prepared Rizal for the next step in his education. In 1885, after receiving his degree, Rizal travelled first to Paris, to take internship with the leading eye surgeon in Europe, Dr. Louis de Weckert; and then on to study at the famous Augenklinik in Heidelberg, Germany. Besides his work at the clinic, his time in Germany was spent immersing himself in the language and culture. It is lawful that the influence of the German classics—especially the great poet of freedom, Friedrich Schiller—is evident throughout both of his novels. The following year in Leipzig, Rizal would translate Schiller's drama *Wilhelm Tell* into Tagalog, although it would not be published until 1907.

In Heidelberg, Rizal would finish writing and publish his first novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, a semi-autobiographical novel which portrays the social crisis in the Philippines. The title refers to the words of the resurrected Jesus to Mary Magdelene in the Gospel of John, translated as "Touch me not." Rizal opens *Noli* with an excerpt from Friedrich Schiller's poem, "Shakespeare's Ghost" (in a translation of Arnold Forster):

What! No Caesar upon your boards? No mighty  
Achilles?  
Is Andromache gone? Does not Orestes appear?  
No, but there are priests and shrewd commercial  
attachés,  
Subalterns and scribes, majors enough of hussars.  
But, I pray you my friend. What can such a laughable  
medley  
Do that is really great? Greatness, how can they  
achieve?

This was followed by his dedication which situates Rizal's choice of the book's title:

To My Motherland

In the annals of human adversity, there is etched a cancer of a breed so malignant that the least contact exacerbates it and stirs in it the sharpest of pain. And thus, many times amidst modern cultures, I have wanted to evoke you, sometimes for memories of you to keep me company, other times to compare you with other nations. Many times your beloved image appears to me afflicted with a social cancer of similar malignancy. Desiring your well-being which is our own, and searching for the best cure, I will do with you as the ancients of old did with their afflicted: expose them on the steps of the temple, so that each one who would come to invoke the divine, would propose a cure for them. And to this end, I will attempt to faithfully reproduce your condition without much ado. I will lift part of the shroud that conceals your illness, sacrificing to the truth everything, even my own self-respect; for as your son, I also suffer in your defects and failings.

The Author, Europe, 1886

The plot of *Noli* follows the life of Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra, who returns to the Philippines after several years of study in Europe. He has the best intentions, but comes immediately into conflict with a society dominated by corrupted friars and complacent civil authorities. In a letter to a friend, Rizal discusses his goal in writing the book: "I have tried to do what no one has been willing to do; I have had to reply to the calumnies which for centuries have been heaped upon us and our country; I have described the state of our society, our life, our beliefs, our hopes, our desires, our laments and our grievances; I have unmasked the hypocrisy,

which, under the cloak of Religion, came among us to impoverish us.”

## Rediscovering the Philippines' History

In 1887, Rizal arrived in Berlin. Through the introduction of his Austrian friend Ferdinand Blumentritt, Rizal became acquainted with Dr. Rudolf Virchow, Feodor Jagor, and Wilhelm Jöst. All of these figures had written about the Philippines. As a youth, Rizal had read the prophetic book concerning Jagor's travels to the archipelago. Dr. Virchow was not only a medical doctor and pioneer in cell biology, who founded the famous Moabit Hospital in Berlin, but was a Catholic political activist and member of the Reichstag.

Rizal returned to the Philippines in 1888 to deal with some of the not insignificant controversy generated by his book,

and to take care of family legal matters. His troubles grew quickly, and by the end of 1888 he left the country for Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, and, finally, England. In England, he stayed primarily to work annotating a rare 17th-Century history of the Philippines, *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas (Events in the Philippine Islands)*, written by Antonio de Morga, an early Spanish explorer of the region.

Rizal designed this volume, with his commentary, to destroy the myth that art and science had not pre-dated Spanish influence in the Philippines. It documented native language culture and promoted the re-establishment of a Filipino national identity based on industry, trade, and craftsmanship. The book began to circulate widely in the Philippines, which alarmed the authorities because of its nationalist polemics. They derided what they considered its doubtful claims.

## In Philippines, We Have a Mission

*This is the address to the Labor Day 2002 conference of the International Caucus of Labor Committees and Schiller Institute, of Antonio Valdes, Jr., and Carlos Valdes, leaders of the LaRouche Society of the Philippines.*

Mr. and Mrs. Lyndon LaRouche, Mrs. Amelia Robinson, members of the Schiller Institute, greetings from the Philippines.

As the world is now approaching her darkest hour, I feel truly blessed and honored to be amongst people with pure intentions, in an attempt to save civilization and humanity as a whole. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, once again, to be in the presence of the greatest minds and the noblest of hearts.

Up until about two decades ago, we were fortunate enough to have a glimpse of a rising economy. Some of our leaders had initiative and a foresight to develop infrastructure programs for power, transport, water, and other utilities. Unfortunately, their terms were cut short, and their programs were never followed. Since then, the economy has been crashing down.

### José Rizal and Friedrich Schiller

As you all know, it's been a wild and crazy couple of years for us. You see, despite our love for the republican heritage, we'd rather resort to democratic methods of resolving disputes. In a span of three years, we've had two Presidents and Vice Presidents, three Defense Secretaries, three military Chiefs of Staff, three National Police chiefs, two Education Secretaries, two National Tax heads, and

two Foreign Secretaries; and the list goes on. See? Democracy works!

To give you an overview of the state of the economy today: For the past decade, the Philippine peso has devalued by over 100%. More than a quarter of the population have not experienced the basic necessity of running water. There is no efficient transport system within Metro Manila, and it gets worse in the outside provinces. All utilities have successfully been deregulated. The stock market is now worth only one-third of when it was at its highest. The peace and order situation has been deteriorating, giving you a sense of how the state has lost its ability to defend itself and its people, against internal (much less external) enemies. And finally, we consider our nation's most important resource, our people, are leaving the country in droves, hoping to find a better future abroad. With them, they bring the best minds and the best skills, and whatever glimmer of hope the Philippines was depending on for its development.

Oh, but one thing that hasn't changed, is our economic policy. But, we're working on that. It has been over a year now, since our organization was begun, and despite assorted moments of fun we've had building the movement, it has been a source of inspiration, education, and personal fulfillment for all involved.

Our involvement with the LaRouche movement has compelled us to look into our own history for Classical cultural traditions. The most notable intellectual link, resides in the writings and thoughts of our own national hero, Dr. José Rizal. Dr. Rizal was trained as an ophthalmic surgeon by leading specialists in Paris, Heidelberg, and Berlin. He was an artist and a poet, and by choice a scholar, an historian, a researcher, and a prolific writer. He wrote in Spanish, Tagalog, German, French, English, and Italian, and spoke a few other modern languages. In addition, he

Rizal's dedication to *Sucesos* is entitled, "To the Filipinos":

In the *Noli Me Tangere* I began the sketch of the present state of our fatherland; the effect which my attempt produced made me understand that before continuing to unveil to your eyes other succeeding pictures, I must first make known the past, so that it may be possible to judge better the present and measure the path which has been traversed during three centuries.

Born and brought up, as almost all of you, in the ignorance of our Yesterday, without an authoritative voice to speak of what we neither saw nor studied, I considered it necessary to invoke the testimony of an illustrious Spaniard who directed the destinies of the

Filipinos in the beginnings of the new era and witnessed the last moments of our ancient nationality. . . .

If this book succeeds in awakening in you the consciousness of our past, which has been blotted out from our memories, and in rectifying what has been falsified by calumny, then I will not have labored in vain, and with this foundation, tiny as it may be, we can all dedicate ourselves to studying the future.

### **The Issue of Violence: Again, Schiller**

In January 1889, Marcelo del Pilar arrived in Barcelona from Manila where he had been a major figure in the political efforts to overthrow the power of the religious orders and the friars. He joined the newspaper *La Solidaridad* that had been started by Mariano Ponce and Pablo Rianzares. López Jaena

knew Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. He often referred to Cervantes, Schiller, Shakespeare, and Dante in his writings.

Curiously, and perhaps inevitably, Rizal was enamored of the writings of Friedrich Schiller. During his visit to Altdorf, Rizal was so inspired by Friedrich Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*, that he translated it into Tagalog. In an article, entitled "The Philippines, A Century Hence," he forced Filipinos to look to the day, when they should have shaken off Spanish rule. He also speculated that the United States might one day think of acquiring the Philippines, but added that this would be against American traditions.

Rizal wrote: "I want to show those who deny us patriotism, that we know how to die for our duties and convictions." But, unlike his compatriots, who advocated armed revolution as a one-time solution, Rizal was also critical of the follies of man. He wrote: "I am most anxious for the liberties of our country. But I place, as a prior condition, the education of the people, so that our country may have an individuality of its own, and make itself worthy of liberties. Only love can work wonders. Only virtue can redeem. What is the use of independence, if the slaves of today, will be the tyrants of tomorrow?"

He continued, "I do not mean to say that our freedom must be won at the point of a sword. But we must win our freedom by deserving it, by loving what is just, what is good, what is great, to the point of dying for it. When a people reach these heights, God provides a weapon, and the idols and tyrants fall like a house of cards, and freedom shines within the first dawn." [applause]

### **History Is Built Through Ideas**

The universal influence of Schiller was apparent, even in his moment of trial and death. The republic, however, was short-lived, because the United States of America, ironically, embarked upon its own colonial experiment.

While the Philippine Republic was consolidating its governance of the entire country, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States for \$20 million.

Today, in the Philippines, much like in many parts of the world, the tradition which is based on culture and intellectual Renaissance, is all but gone: Asia and the rest of the world hangs in the balance. But, as in the past, mankind has been able to think itself out of its own predicament, producing geniuses that provide the necessary guidance and elucidation in the darkest of times. The Philippine LaRouche Society is named after individuals who choose to pull mankind out of its erotic fantasies, and into the realm of what makes us in the image and likeness of God. As all of you know, building a movement from scratch has been a rough, and often confusing journey, especially a movement committed to establishing a new, global Renaissance. But, as Lyn has often said, "A mass movement is not built through broad coalitions, but through ideas. Given the right and true ideas, one man is a mass movement by himself."

Our nation's history of fighting for freedom has always rested in the noble idea, that the Philippines has a unique mission in the world. So, despite a tough road facing our nation, and knowing that we are part of a global Renaissance movement, we will continue to have fun! Indeed, that is what leadership is all about: Just as the great minds of history inspired José Rizal and other ordinary citizens to become geniuses, so, too, inspired by Lyndon LaRouche, shall we labor to be worthy of being called "beings *imago viva Dei*."

And finally, as Schiller says, "I would not wish to live in a century other than my own, or to have worked for any other. We are citizens of our own age, no less than of our own state. We must, at the same time, be citizens of the world, and patriots of our nation."





*A portrait of Rizal by Juan Luna, when both were expatriate Filipino leaders in Madrid in the early 1880s. Rizal's extraordinary speech at the Madrid Exposition of 1884, celebrating the artistic gold medals won by Filipinos—Luna, and Felix Hidalgo—stirred the entire expatriate community and was published in Madrid and Manila newspapers. Rizal trained himself in painting and sculpture; right, a small clay sculpture of Prometheus bound.*

was the editor, and Rizal collaborated with articles and poems that he contributed from London, until he returned also to Spain. Del Pilar was also the official delegate to Spain of the Propaganda Committee in Manila. Del Pilar and his circle were highly political and active within political and Masonic layers. Eventually, Rizal broke with Del Pilar, deciding that he could no longer wait to return to the Philippines.

Rizal had always been troubled by the moral laxity within the Philippine expatriate community. Gambling, drinking, and indifference to the future of the Philippines provoked him to set an example and to demand a standard of conduct from his associates and countrymen. In the end, he became impatient with the political jockeying and pragmatic effort to curry favor in Spain. His evocation of destiny, and his perception of the sublime, are reflected in a response to news from Manila of legal harassment and arrests in 1889: "Though we must regret this [the arrests] as a private misfortune, we must applaud it as a general good. Without 1872 [the executions of Fathers Burgos, Gómez, and Zamora], there would not now be any Plaridel, or Jaena, or Sancianco, nor would the valiant and generous Filipino colonies in Europe exist; without 1872, Rizal would now be a Jesuit, and instead of writing the *Noli Me Tangere*, would have written the contrary. At the sight of those injustices and cruelties, though still a child, my imagination awoke, and I swore I would dedicate myself to avenge one day so many victims, and with this idea I have gone on studying, and this can be read in all my works and writings. God will one day grant me the opportunity to fulfill my promise. Good! Let them commit abuses, let there be arrests, exiles,

executions, good! Let destiny be fulfilled! The day on which they lay their hand on us, the day on which they inflict martyrdom on our innocent families for our fault, farewell, pro-friar government, and perhaps, farewell, Spanish Government!"

In 1891, Rizal departed from Madrid, and relocated in Ghent, Belgium. His second novel, *El Filibusterismo*, which he began when he was in England in 1889, was nearly complete. Since he had little money, the printing began section by section. Funds that he expected from the Propaganda Committee and from home never materialized. Facing near-starvation to publish what he could on his own, his problem was solved when a friend in Paris sent him the money to complete the project.

In his dedication to his second novel, Rizal wrote:

To the memory of the priests, Don Mariano Gómez (85 years old), Don José Burgos (30 years old), and Don Jacinto Zamora (35 years old). Executed in Bagumbayan Field on the 28th of February, 1872.

The Church upon refusing to degrade you, has placed in doubt the crime that has been imputed to you; the Government, by surrounding your trials with mystery and shadows, causes the belief that there was some error committed in fatal moments; and all the Philippines, by worshipping your memory and calling you martyrs, in no sense recognizes your culpability. In so far, therefore, as your complicity in the Cavite mutiny is not clearly proved, as you may or may not have been patriots, and as you may or may not have cherished



Rizal with members of the Propaganda Movement in Madrid during the 1880s; he later founded the Liga Filipina, providing leadership for the rights of Filipinos under Spanish rule. The inset shows Rizal's two novels, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, which had great impact on Filipino nationalists.

sentiments for justice and for liberty, I have the right to dedicate my work to you as victims of the evils which I undertake to combat. And while we await expectantly for Spain some day to restore your good name and to cease to be answerable for your death, let these pages serve as a tardy wreath of leaves over your unknown tombs, and let it be understood that everyone who without clear proofs attacks your memory stains his hands in your blood!

*El Filibusterismo* is a sequel to the first novel, but it has a different tenor. It is more philosophical, and there are a series of dialogues within and between events of the story which address poignantly the challenges that face the future of the Philippines. The central character of *Noli* returns in disguise, but instead of the idealistic Juan Crisóstomo Ibarra, the reader is introduced to Simoun, a dark and cynical figure vowing revenge and violence against a society that he believed could not be changed otherwise. In this way, Rizal intervened in a fundamental debate. Personally, he was known to oppose violence, but in the character of Simoun, he appears to advocate it.

The highlight of the story is at the denouement, when Padre Florentino comforts the dying protagonist, Simoun, paraphrasing Schiller's immortal Rütli Oath from *Wilhelm Tell*.

“ ‘According to you, then,’ feebly responded the sick man, ‘His will is that these islands—’

“ ‘Should continue in the condition in which they suffer?’ finished the priest, seeing that the other hesitated. ‘I don’t know, sir, I can’t read the thought of the Inscrutable. I know that He has not abandoned those peoples who in their supreme moments have trusted in Him and made Him the Judge of

their cause. I know that His arm has never failed when, justice long trampled upon and every recourse gone, the oppressed have taken up the sword to fight for home and wife and children, for their inalienable rights, which, as the German poet says, shine ever there above, unextinguished and inextinguishable, like the eternal stars themselves. No, God is justice, He cannot abandon His cause, the cause of liberty, without which no justice is possible.’ ”

### Return and Repression

With *El Filibusterismo* published, Rizal sent almost every copy to Hong Kong, whence it was to be secreted in to the Philippines. He departed Europe from Marseilles on Oct. 18, 1891; but because of the harsh conditions imposed at home by Governor General Valeriano Weyler, Rizal travelled first to Hong Kong, where he was re-united with numerous expatriates and family members who had been exiled.

In November 1891, Weyler was replaced by Gen. Eulogio Despujol y Dusay. Despujol’s regime as Governor General was cause for optimism for Rizal, as there were significant reforms enacted, and corrupt officials were replaced and sent back to Spain. Rizal corresponded with Despujol to negotiate his return to the Philippines. Rizal’s return to Manila took place on June 26, 1892. The two men met to discuss Rizal’s plans and the status of Rizal’s family, which was still in exile. Despujol kept a close eye on Rizal’s activity, as there was tremendous pressure on him to maintain discipline in the country, despite the sympathy he might have had for Rizal.

For his part, Rizal had no intention of retiring. In re-establishing his political contacts, he promoted his idea for a national civic organization, which he called Liga Filipina. This open challenge became too much for Rizal’s enemies. Finally, an incident involving subversive handbills allegedly found

by customs officials in the baggage of Rizal's sister, served as the justification for a crackdown. The homes of leading propagandists and reformists were searched, and Rizal and others were sent into internal exile by the government.

Rizal was kept for the next four years in Dapitan, in southern Mindanao, isolated from all contact with persons active in the liberation movement. He spent his time teaching, writing, researching various projects, and practicing medicine. During this time, Rizal began a relationship with Josephine Bracken, the daughter of a patient who had travelled to Dapitan. They were unable to marry because the parish priest demanded that he retract his views on the Church. Since civil marriages were unknown in the Philippines at that time, Rizal took Josephine as his wife despite the Church.

Rizal may have thought that the focus of the movement had passed him by. His petitions to the government for liberty provoked no response, until finally his allies in the provincial government agreed to allow Rizal to volunteer as a medical doctor for the Spanish Army in Cuba, and the ban on his leaving the Philippines was lifted.

Civil War had erupted in Cuba during 1895, and Spanish rule was in jeopardy there. In the Philippines, the political crisis was escalating as well. Andrés Bonifacio, a 29-year-old warehouseman who had met Rizal in 1892, became the catalyst behind the recruitment of a guerrilla movement called Katipunan, out of the remnants of Rizal's Liga Filipina. Using Rizal's name and writings as inspiration, Bonifacio organized among the poor and working-class population. Bonifacio's call to arms contradicted Rizal's long-held rejection of violence as a means of social change, and attracted allegations that he was actually involved in the organizing of Katipunan.

The story of José Rizal's last days is tragic. In the midst of oppression and injustice, his friends and family again said goodbye to him as he prepared to leave for Cuba. On Sept. 2, Rizal was transferred to the *Isla de Panay*, a mail steamer, and the next afternoon it left the Bay of Manila for Spain. But before the ship was able to reach Spain, a military court in Manila issued indictments against him, and he was returned from Europe to stand trial.

As a prelude to the trial, a virtual state of siege was imposed over the country. There were mass arrests, and the Katipunan forces acted in open, violent defiance of the Spanish military. José's brother, Paciano, was tortured nearly to death in an attempt to suborn a confession implicating José in the rebellion. Still, Rizal maintained his opposition to violence, and wrote the following statement, entitled, "To Some Filipinos":

Countrymen:

On my return from Spain I learned that my name had been in use, among some who were in arms, as a war-cry. The news came as a painful surprise, but, believing it already closed, I kept silent over an incident which I considered irremediable. Now, I notice indications of the disturbances continuing, and if any still, in

good or bad faith, are availing themselves of my name, to stop this abuse and undeceive the unwary, I hasten to address you these lines that the truth may be known.

From the very beginning, when I first had notice of what was being planned, I opposed it, fought it, and demonstrated its absolute impossibility. This is the fact, and witnesses to my words are now living. I was convinced that the scheme was utterly absurd, and, what was worse, would bring great suffering.

I did even more. When later, against my advice, the movement materialized, of my own accord I offered not alone my good offices, but my very life, and even my name, to be used in whatever way might seem best, toward stifling the rebellion; for, convinced of the ills which it would bring, I considered myself fortunate if, at any sacrifice, I could prevent such useless misfortunes. This equally is of record.

My countrymen, I have given proofs that I am one most anxious for liberties for our country, and I am still desirous of them. But I place as a prior condition the education of the people, that by means of instruction and industry our country may have an individuality of its own and make itself worthy of these liberties. I have recommended in my writings the study of the civic virtues, without which there is no redemption. I have written likewise (and I repeat my words) that reforms, to be beneficial, must come from above, that those which come from below are irregularly gained and uncertain.

Holding these ideas, I cannot do less than condemn, and I do condemn this uprising—as absurd, savage, and plotted behind my back—which dishonors us Filipinos and discredits those who could plead our cause. I abhor its criminal methods and disclaim all part in it, pitying from the bottom of my heart the unwary who have been deceived.

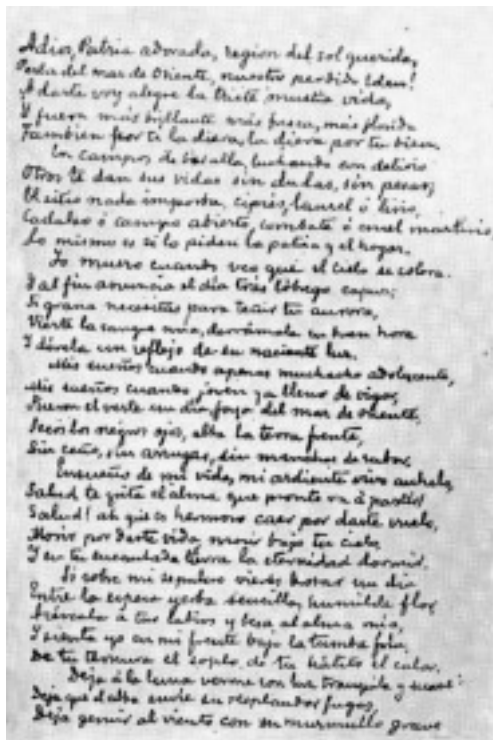
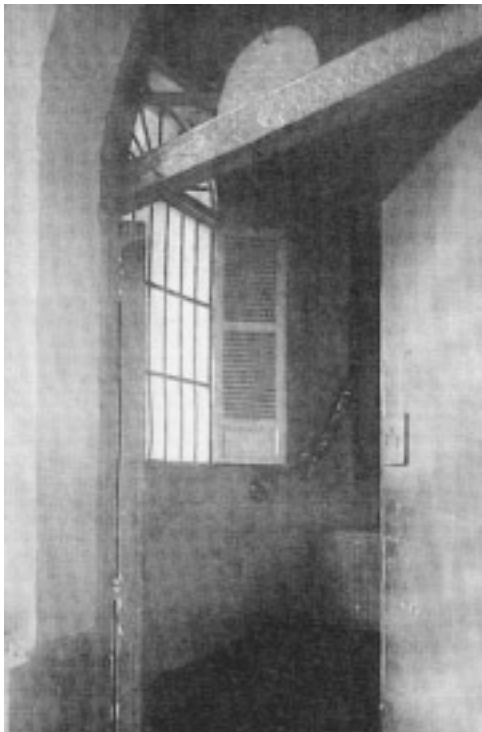
Return, then, to your homes, and may God pardon those who have worked in bad faith!

This statement was never to be publicly released. Nevertheless, Bonifacio openly denounced Rizal as a coward for his refusal to support the uprising, at the same time that he mobilized the Katipunan for an attempt to liberate Rizal in Manila!

## The Martyrdom of Rizal

After a court-martial had been convened by the Judge Advocate of the Spanish Courts in Manila in late 1896, it was charged that Dr. José Rizal had founded an illegal society for the purpose of fomenting a rebellion, and that Rizal was responsible for the rebellion that had recently broken out in the Philippines. The charges were absurd, but Rizal's enemies would not be deterred by the law. The colonial powers were intent on crushing the nationalist spirit that he personified, even more than the rebellion itself.

After a two-week "legal process," Rizal was condemned



The cell in which Rizal was held at Fort Santiago between his railroad trial and his execution. At right, a page of the beautiful "Last Farewell" poem, which he smuggled to his sister.

to death by firing squad. His last days were filled with farewells to family and making amends with the Catholic Church in order to officially consecrate his marriage to Josephine Bracken, which had been prevented because of Rizal's apostasy and association with Freemasonry. The negotiations were undertaken by a number of Jesuit priests, many of whom were known to Rizal going back to his days at the Ateneo Municipal. According to the Jesuit account, Rizal expressed his wish to make his Confession. The Catholic Church, in the persons of Archbishop Nozaleda and Father Pío Pi, the Superior of the Jesuits, demanded that Rizal put his signature on a "retraction of his errors," which the Church claimed that he finally did.

The nature of Rizal's compliance is debated to this day. Over the years, he had engaged in extended correspondence defending his writings, both philosophically and theologically: in particular, the letters exchanged with Fr. Pablo Pastells, S.J. during his exile in Dapitan. In October 1892, Father Pastells had blamed Protestant influence for *Noli Me Tangere*, and Freemasonic influence for *El Filibusterismo*. The reply, while only a small excerpt of their in-depth correspondence, characterizes Rizal's attitude.

José Rizal to Fr. Pablo Pastells, S.J., Oct. 11, 1892:

Rizal a Protestant! Only out of respect for Your Reverence can I suppress the guffaw that rises inside me. Your Reverence should have heard my discussions with a Protestant pastor in the long Summer evenings in the lonely depths of the Black Forest (Germany). There, speaking freely, calmly, with deliberation, we dis-

cussed our respective beliefs in the morality of peoples and the influences on them of their respective creeds. A great respect for the good faith of the adversary, and for ideas which were necessarily poles apart due to the diversity of race, education and age, led us almost always to the conclusion that religions, no matter what they were, should not make men enemies of one another, but friends, and good friends at that.

From these discussions, which took place almost every day for more than three months, I think I got nothing more, if my judgment does not fail me, than a profound respect for any idea conceived with sincerity and practiced with conviction. Almost every month the Catholic parish priest of a little town on the banks of the Rhine came to visit [the Protestant pastor], and this priest, an intimate friend of the Protestant, gave me an example of Christian brotherhood. They considered themselves two servants of the same God, and instead of spending their time quarrelling with each other, each one did his duty, leaving it to their Master to judge afterwards who had best interpreted His Will.

On the morning of Dec. 30, 1896, the sentence of death against José Rizal was carried out on the Luneta, a field overlooking Manila Bay.

### Rizal's Sublime Mission

His martyrdom had not been unexpected. On the eve of his final return home to his native land four years earlier in 1892, Rizal had written two letters that he left in the hands of



*The United States took the Philippines from Spain during the Spanish-American War, which began in 1898. As in Cuba, the leaders of local forces seeking independence from Spain were disappointed the American intervention did not bring immediate independence.*

his friend in Hong Kong, Dr. Márquez. They were marked, “To be opened after my death.” One was addressed to his “beloved parents, brother and sisters.” It read:

The affection that I have ever professed for you suggests this step, and time alone can tell whether or not it is sensible. Their outcome decides things by results, but whether that be favorable or unfavorable, it may always be said that duty urged me, so if I die in doing it, it will not matter.

I realize how much suffering I have caused you; still I do not regret what I have done. Rather, if I had to begin over again, still I should do just the same, for it has been only duty. Gladly do I go to expose myself to peril, not as my expiation of misdeeds (for in this matter I believe myself guiltless of any), but to complete my work and myself offer the example of which I have always preached.

A man ought to die for duty and his principles. I hold fast to every idea which I have advanced as to the condition and future of our country, and shall willingly die for it, and even more willingly procure for you justice and peace.

With pleasure, then, I risk life to save so many innocent persons—so many nieces and nephews, so many children of friends, and children, too, of others who are not even friends—who are suffering on my account. What am I? A single man, practically without family, and sufficiently undeceived as to life. I have had many disappointments and the future before me is gloomy, and will be gloomy if light does not illuminate it, the dawn of a better day for my native land. On the other

hand, there are many individuals, filled with hope and ambition, who perhaps all might be happy were I dead, and then I hope my enemies would be satisfied and stop persecuting so many entirely innocent people. To a certain extent their hatred is justifiable as to myself, and my parents and relatives.

Should fate go against me, you will all understand that I shall die happy in the thought that my death will end all your troubles. Return to our country and may you be happy in it.

Till the last moment of life I shall be thinking of you and wishing you all good fortune and happiness.

The second letter was addressed “To the Filipinos.” It read:

The step which I am taking, or rather am about to take, is undoubtedly risky, and it is unnecessary to say that I have considered it some time. I understand that almost everyone is opposed to it; but I know also that hardly anybody else comprehends what is in my heart. I cannot live on seeing so many suffer unjust persecutions on my account; I cannot bear longer the sight of my sisters and their numerous families treated like criminals. I prefer death and cheerfully shall relinquish life to free so many innocent persons from such unjust persecution.

I appreciate that at present the future of our country gravitates in some degree around me; that at my death many will feel triumphant, and, in consequence, many are wishing for my fall. But what of it? I hold duties of conscience above all else; I have obligations to the

families who suffer, to my aged parents whose sighs strike me to the heart; I know that I alone, only with my death, can make them happy, returning them to their native land and to peaceful life at home. I am all my parents have, but our country has many, many more sons who can take my place and even do my work better.

Besides I wish to show those who deny us patriotism that we know how to die for duty and principles. What matters death, if one dies for what one loves, for native land and beings held dear?

If I thought that I were the only resource for the policy of progress in the Philippines, and were I convinced that my countrymen were going to make use of my services, perhaps I should hesitate about taking this step; but there are still others who can take my place, who, too, can take my place with advantage. Furthermore, there are perchance those who hold me needed and my services are not utilized, resulting that I am reduced to inactivity.

Always have I loved our unhappy land, and I am sure that I shall continue loving it till my latest moment, in case men prove unjust to me. My career, my life, my happiness, all have I sacrificed for love of it. Whatever my fate, I shall die blessing it and longing for the dawn of its redemption.

The postscript announced, "Make these letters public after my death."

## The Farewell

The final poem that he had composed in the days before the execution was written down and hidden in an alcohol burner that Rizal gave to his sister. She found the poem after his death.

### My Last Farewell

Farewell, dear Fatherland, clime of the sun caress'd,  
Pearl of the Orient seas, our Eden lost!  
Gladly now I go to give thee this faded life's best,  
And were it brighter, fresher, or more blest  
Still would I give it thee, nor count the cost.

On the field of battle, 'mid the frenzy of fight,  
Others have given their lives, without doubt or heed;  
The place matters not—cypress or laurel or lily white  
Scaffold or open plain, combat or martyrdom's plight,  
'Tis ever the same, to serve our home and country's  
need.

I die just when I see the dawn break,  
Through the gloom of night, to herald the day;  
And if color is lacking my blood thou shalt take,  
Pour'd out at need for thy dear sake,  
To dye with its crimson the waking ray.

My dreams, when life first opened to me,  
My dreams, when the hopes of youth beat high,  
Were to see thy lov'd face, O gem of the Orient sea,  
From gloom and grief, from care and sorrow free  
No blush on thy brow, no tear in thine eye.

Dream of my life, my living and burning desire,  
All hail! cries the soul that is now to take flight;  
All hail! And sweet it is for thee to expire;  
To die for thy sake, that thou mayst aspire;  
And sleep in thy bosom eternity's long night.

If over my grave some day thou seest grow,  
In the grassy sod, a humble flower,  
Draw it to thy lips and kiss my soul so,  
While I may feel on my brow in the cold tomb below  
The touch of thy tenderness, thy breath's warm  
power.

Let the moon beam over me soft and serene,  
Let the dawn shed over me its radiant flashes,  
Let the wind with sad lament over me keen;  
And if on my cross a bird should be seen,  
Let it trill there its hymn of peace to my ashes.

Let the sun draw the vapors up to the sky,  
And heavenward in purity bear my tardy protest;  
Let some kind soul o'er my untimely fate sigh  
And in the still evening a prayer be lifted on high  
From thee, O my country, that in God, I may rest.

Pray for all those that hapless have died,  
For all who have suffered the unmeasur'd pain;  
For our mothers that bitterly their woes have cried,  
For widows and orphans, for captives by torture tried,  
And then for thyself that redemption thou mayst gain.

And when the dark night wraps the graveyard around  
With only the dead in their vigil to see,  
Break not my repose or the mystery profound,  
And perchance thou mayst hear a sad hymn resound;  
'Tis I, O my country, raising a song unto thee.

And even my grave is remembered no more,  
Unmark'd by never a cross nor a stone,  
Let the plow sweep through it, the spade turn it o'er  
That my ashes may carpet the earthly floor,  
Before into nothingness at last they are blown.

Then will oblivion bring to me no care,  
As over thy vales and plains I sweep;  
Throbbing and cleansed in thy space and air  
With color and light, with song and lament I fare,  
Ever repeating the faith that I keep.

My Fatherland ador'd, that sadness to my sorrow  
lends;  
Beloved Filipinas, hear now my last good-by!  
I give thee all: parents and kindred and friends,  
For I go where no slave before the oppressor bends,  
Where faith can never kill, and God reigns e'er on  
high!

Farewell to you all, from my soul torn away,  
Friends of my childhood in the home dispossessed!  
Give thanks that I rest from the wearisome day!  
Farewell to thee, too, sweet friend that lightened my  
way;

Beloved creatures all, farewell! In death there is rest!

—translation by Charles Derbyshire

### 'Evils That Must Be Cured Radically'

The execution of Rizal began the final chapter of Spanish occupation. After the death of Bonifacio, Emilio Aguinaldo would take command of the Revolution. A generation of youth bred on the polemics of the Propaganda Movement and specifically motivated by the ideas of José Rizal rose up to defeat the Spanish Army. After first being exiled to Hong Kong, Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines with the help of the United States, after the Spanish-American War broke out in April 1898. Before the American Army arrived, the Filipinos under Aguinaldo had driven the Spanish off the countryside into two enclaves at Cavite and Manila. The First Philippine Republic was proclaimed in June 1898 at Malolos with Emilio Aguinaldo as President.

When the American land forces finally arrived to force the surrender of the Spanish, the Filipinos were betrayed by the United States. Instead of independence, which the revolutionaries had been led to believe would be granted by the United States, the Treaty of Paris between Spain and the United States declared the Philippines to be American Territory. Aguinaldo and the generation of Rizal, who had wanted American collaboration in their liberation from Spanish rule, then opened a two-year military campaign against U.S. occupation. Finally in March 1901, after many of his leading commanders had been taken by the Americans, Aguinaldo himself was captured.

To the credit of the United States, Emilio Aguinaldo was not exiled or executed. Rather, he was tapped by the Americans to lead the Filipinos in restoring civilian government.

The Filipino national identity is not bound to the legacy of Rizal alone. Rizal was an *ilustrado*, of the educated class, but the success of Bonifacio and the Katipunan demonstrated his appeal among the downtrodden and dispossessed. Without Rizal, there would not be a Philippine nation, but the success of the revolution did not depend on him alone. According to Rizal, all sectors of society had their role to play in a true republic. He believed in a peaceful transformation of society, but in an article in *La Solidaridad* entitled, "The Philippines



*Emilio Aguinaldo led the military rebellion which began at the period of Rizal's execution, and had effectively defeated the Spanish forces when Dewey's fleet took the Philippines. Expecting an alliance with America, Aguinaldo instead was hunted and captured by American forces. But he was shortly freed to take a leading role in the Philippines, which became independent five decades later.*

a Century Hence," he foretold what he saw as the actual future dynamic of the process.

We also said that this transformation will be violent and fatal if it proceeds from the ranks of the people, but peaceful and fruitful if it emanates from the upper classes.

Some governors have realized this truth, and, impelled by their patriotism, have been trying to introduce needed reforms in order to forestall events. But notwithstanding all that have been ordered up to the present time, they have produced scanty results, for the government as well as for the country. Even those that promised only a happy issue have at times caused injury, for the simple reason that they have been based upon unstable grounds.

We said, and once more we repeat, and will ever assert, that reforms which have a palliative character are not only ineffectual but even prejudicial, when the government is confronted with evils that must be cured radically. And were we not convinced of the honesty and rectitude of some governors, we would be tempted to say that all the partial reforms are only plasters and salves of a physician who, not knowing how to cure the cancer, and not daring to root it out, tries in this way to alleviate the patient's sufferings or to temporize with the cowardice of the timid and ignorant.

### **'We Await You, O Youth!'**

The personality of Dr. José Rizal is still a burning issue in the Philippines today. He is acknowledged as the National Hero, yet small minds and weak hearts echo the petty criticism of Rizal's enemies. The Catholic Church still stings from his challenges; the self-proclaimed defenders of the poor decry his comfortable upbringing; and the advocates of violence condemn his pacifism. Time is the test of all great historical figures, and try as his detractors might, they cannot deny that Rizal united and uplifted the Filipino people uniquely. He gave a positive identity and a universal mission to all Filipinos by his words and by his deeds. He began making sacrifices and commitments very early in his life, not simply out of love for his country, but for the sake of

humanity and posterity.

Though only 35 years old at his demise, Rizal was already immortal in his pursuit of justice and liberty. He went to his death not knowing that in death, he would give birth to a new nation; but he did so as an example of the necessary risk that must be taken to guarantee that such institutions are founded, defended, and perpetuated. Can there be any greater reason to live?

As much as José Rizal believed in education and non-violence, by having Padre Florentino paraphrase Schiller's clarion call for "limits to a tyrant's power," from the Rütli Oath in *Wilhelm Tell* in his *El Filibusterismo*, Rizal spoke volumes about the moral and intellectual tradition that he held up for his countrymen. Rizal's hope for the future is punctuated by Padre Florentino at the end of that same final soliloquy:

"Where are the youth who will consecrate their budding years, their idealism and enthusiasm to the welfare of their country? Where are the youth who will generously pour out their blood to wash away so much shame, so much crime, so much abomination? Pure and spotless must the victim be, that the sacrifice may be acceptable! Where are you, youth, who will embody in yourselves the vigor of life that has lift our veins, the purity of ideas that has been contaminated in our hearts? We await you, O youth! Come, for we await you!"

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