

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

The Philippine Revolution: The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Philippine Revolution

Review Author: H. de la Costa

Philippine Studies vol. 6, no. 4 (1958): 466–470

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

Book Reviews

THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

THE POLITICAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL IDEAS OF THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION. By Cesar Adib Majul. Quezon City. University of the Philippines. 1957. Pp. xiv, 212.

LITTLE has been written on the intellectual history of the Philippine Revolution since the days of Don Felipe Calderón and Don Epifanio de los Santos. Prof. Majul's book will therefore be welcomed as resuming operations in this neglected area.

Before descending to details it might be well to glance at the general structure of the work. The first chapter is devoted to a rapid survey of the Propaganda Movement and the Revolution, chiefly for the purpose of placing the national leaders whose ideas are to be analyzed in their chronological context. The rest of the work is in two parts. The first part (ch. 2-5) is concerned with what might be called the political philosophy of the leaders of the Propaganda, chiefly Rizal, and the theorists of the Revolution, chiefly Jacinto and Mabini. The second part (ch. 6-8) deals with the various solutions proposed to two constitutional problems which arose at the Malolos Congress: the problem of the relationship between church and state and the problem of the relationship between the executive and the legislative branches of government. Chapter 9 embodies Prof. Majul's conclusions.

What emerges quite clearly from the first part of the study is that Rizal, Jacinto and Mabini, in spite of characteristic variations, held a number of basic principles in common. They may be stated thus: Man was created by God. All men are equal

in that they possess a common human nature. This nature has been endowed by God with an *ineluctable* tendency towards intellectual and moral perfection. It is in order to secure the means and conditions necessary to the fulfilment of this tendency that men come together in civil societies or states. Hence the proper function of the state is twofold: first, to remove the obstacles in the way of the intellectual and moral development of its members; second, positively to promote that development.

The state cannot perform its function without a government endowed with authority. The authority of government is derived immediately from the people, for whose sake it is exercised, and ultimately from God, the author of that human nature whose basic tendency it subserves. Whence it follows that government ought never to be arbitrary or despotic. It must conform to nature; positive law may not contradict the natural.

It is clear from the preceding what freedom is. Externally, it is the absence of restraint on the individual in the pursuit of the perfection demanded by his nature. Internally, it is the voluntary dedication which the individual makes to this pursuit. Thus, freedom may be defined as spontaneous obedience to law.

Governments which deny or abridge human freedom are bad governments and should be reformed. Reform should be sought by peaceful means, if possible. This responsibility rests on the governed as well as on those who govern. For it often happens that a people loses external freedom because it does not sufficiently cultivate internal freedom. Thus the first and indispensable step towards the achievement of external freedom is for a people to dedicate itself wholeheartedly to the cultivation of that intellectual and moral perfection which is the basic end of human nature. In this sense, the best way to win freedom is to deserve it.

However, a tyranny may have reached so advanced a stage that this peaceful process is rendered morally impossible. In that case, a people may have recourse to revolution. But they ought never to lose sight of what the revolution is for. Its object is not to abolish law but to restore it to its proper place and function; for only under the rule of law is human freedom possible.

Such is the political philosophy developed by the leaders of our national movement. Its debt to the theorists of the French Enlightenment is clear. But as Prof. Majul rightly observes,

equally unmistakable is the influence upon it of the "scholastic" or "Hebraic-Christian" intellectual heritage of their authors. (It might be simpler and also more accurate to say their Catholic heritage.) One might even go further and say that their Catholic heritage influenced, whether consciously or unconsciously, their choice of what principles to take over from the Enlightenment. They did not, for instance, adopt one of the most characteristic (and pernicious) dogmas of Rousseau, that of the General Will resulting from the total renunciation by each individual of his separate sovereignty. In their view, such a renunciation is impossible, since it is in effect to renounce nature itself; and this view is of course in the full "Hebraic-Christian" tradition. Thus, if the totalitarian concept of government to which Rousseau's theory logically leads is absent from our own political tradition, we have the "scholasticism" of our national heroes to thank for it.

In view of this, it is difficult to understand Prof. Majul's statement that "the moral teachings of Rizal, Jacinto, the *Katipunan* and Mabini . . . were secular rules not logically derived from the teachings of the Catholic Church." They may not have been *consciously* so derived, but as we have attempted to show, they are not only perfectly compatible with Catholic doctrine but logically presuppose it.

Prof. Majul's account of the debate in the Malolos Congress on church-state relations is preceded by a chapter entitled: "Church and State: Historical Introduction and General Attitude towards the Church and the Spanish Monastic Orders." This chapter is excellent as a summary of the *attitudes* of those members of the revolutionary government who were in varying degrees hostile to the friars; but we may be pardoned for observing that it hardly serves as a *historical* introduction to the problem which was the subject of their debate. A historical account is, or ought to be, a factual account. In the present instance, such an account should at least attempt to answer the following questions, among others: What, in actual fact, was the position of the Catholic Church with relation to the government during the closing years of the Spanish regime? To what extent, actually, and in what specific instances did the Church, or churchmen, influence or control colonial policy? Just how far did the religious orders, as institutions and not simply in the case of isolated individuals, fall short of their spiritual and social commitments? Precisely

what was the factual basis for the fears expressed at the Congress that the influence of the papacy or the continued presence of Spanish ecclesiastics constituted a clear and present threat to the independence of the republic?

These are admittedly difficult questions to answer in the present state of our knowledge. The basic research has not yet been made which would enable us, for instance, to say with some amount of confidence just what the relationship was between the ordinary people of the small towns and villages—that inarticulate mass which Prof. Majul contrasts with the literate and vocal class of *ilustrados*—and the Spanish friars who acted as their parish priests. We know well enough from Rizal and others what happened at Calamba; but can we, without additional evidence in support, formulate from this specific instance a generalization which would be valid for the entire country? This is the question; and it is a question which has not yet been answered. Certainly it cannot be answered merely from the material submitted by Prof. Majul. That material is made up almost exclusively by what the revolutionary leaders who were hostile to the friars and opposed to the Spanish colonial system as a whole said about them. It must be admitted that they spoke with passionate conviction, and that some of the things they said have the ring of truth; it is obvious, furthermore, that their being national heroes gives to their views an exceptional weight of authority at least for us Filipinos; but it is equally clear that to accept them simply at their face value would be a most unscientific procedure.

To take one or two examples. Many of the accusations hurled by the revolutionary leaders against the religious orders were formally denied by the latter in a collective document which they submitted to the Spanish government, and in many particular apologias written subsequently. How are we to judge between them? Shall we do so merely on the basis of personal preference or prejudice? We may not; we must do so on the evidence. What then is the evidence? Rizal's novels will be adduced, or Del Pilar's *Soberanía monacal*, or De los Reyes' *Sensacional memoria*. But the first are fiction; the second, propaganda; the third, a catalogue of undocumented accusations. The situation at Calamba is once again brought forward, or that at Maiolos. But against these may be ranged the published collection of petitions from town councils urgently requesting the Jesuits to return to their parishes and missions after the Revolution was over, and the

testimony given by the first American bishops to the respect and affection with which many parishes received back their Spanish pastors.

It would of course be equally a prejudgment of the case to take the position that since the Catholic Church is a divine institution, and since Spain brought the Catholic Church to the Philippines, there could have been nothing wrong with the Spanish clergy or with their actual conduct of affairs before or during the Revolution, and that even to suggest the possibility of the contrary is not only an act of black ingratitude to Spain but treason to the Church itself. The fallacy of such an argument is obvious.

The chapter which Prof. Majul devotes to the actual debate on the church-state question at Malolos is one of the best in the book. His analysis of the various arguments proposed in the context of the political theories of the proponents can scarcely be bettered. The present reader found the entire work most stimulating, and hopes that Prof. Majul himself or other scholars will develop some of the exciting possibilities which it opens up.

H. DE LA COSTA

THE INSCRUTABLE WEST

WHAT DOES THE WEST WANT? By George Catlin. Phoenix House. London. 1957. Pp. 150.

IT is perfectly clear what kind of a world the communists want. But what kind of a world does the West want? There seems to be considerable doubt on this point even among westerners themselves—a weakness that may well prove fatal; for as Mr. Catlin observes, “we cannot long remain in competition against those who know their minds, if we do not.”

Mr. Catlin readily concedes that there is little hope of an agreed answer if the problem is posed at the level of ultimate ethical values. Ever since the break-up of medieval unity the