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# Collapse of the Malolos Republic

*Rene Escalante*



The celebration of the centennial of the Malolos Republic is a timely occasion to look back at the factors that led to its early downfall. Teodoro Agoncillo maintained that some of the reasons that could explain the early death of the Republic were internal in nature. Among them were the betrayal of the "haves." Agoncillo used the term "haves" to denote the intellectuals and the wealthy Filipinos and Spanish mestizos. This is to contrast them from the masses who were more radical and nationalist. Among the betrayal were the tragic death of Antonio Luna, the lack of funds and military training of the revolutionaries and the patronage and favoritism that Aguinaldo displayed on his fellow Caviteños. Agoncillo claimed that all of these taken together contributed to what he called "the crisis of the Republic." An examination of the literature and the surviving documents during this period would lead to the conclusion that the Aguinaldo administration was partly to be blamed for the collapse of the Malolos Republic. The euphoria at the height of the revolution was not sustained at the time when political organizations and functions were being established.

From the defeat of the Spanish armada on 1 May 1898 until the end of the year, Aguinaldo tried to consolidate the forces of the country. During that time, he tried to be diplomatic and accommodating towards the various sectors of the society in order to win the support of the people. There were even instances when he sacrificed some of his political powers in order to broaden his political influence. He even allowed the ilustrado-dominated congress to have enormous powers at the expense of the executive. He also replaced the Mabini-led cabinet to get rid of his radical supporters who were hated by the wealthy and the conservatives. These decisions of Aguinaldo made it clear that in the midst of the growing dissention

within his ranks, he wanted to gain the support of the people. It is therefore the aim of this article to critically examine the other factors that contributed to the collapse of the Malolos Republic.

In the attempt to evaluate the policies instituted by Aguinaldo, this article does not have any intention to destroy nor demean the reputation of some of the leading figures of the revolution. Where derogatory remarks are mentioned against Emilio Aguinaldo, Daniel Tirona, Pio del Pilar and other revolutionaries, these were done in the context of providing explanations for the collapse of the Malolos Republic. As stated by Jose Alejandrino (1949, 114–15):

history is written not to unduly praise a nation and much less certain specific persons, but to point out to future generations the vices and defects incurred by their ancestors which became the determining cause of the misfortune of the country, in order that they may avoid them in the future.

This article will focus on the atrocities committed by the revolutionaries, the corruption and selfishness of Aguinaldo's men and the mismanagement of the sequestered properties as some of the other reasons of the crisis of the Malolos Republic. The article will also argue that the constitutional provision on the separation of the Church and the state and the institutionalization of civil marriage further added to the growing unpopularity of the Republic. These two ecclesiastical policies alienated the Republic from the Filipino clergy who were still powerful and influential during that period.

With regard to the reasons that led to the downfall of the Malolos Republic, this article is limited to the internal reasons. Internal reasons here refer to those events and policies which were within the control and jurisdiction of the revolutionaries. Other scholars claimed that the superiority of the Americans in matters of arms, tactics and military training were the deciding factors that determined the fate of the Republic. Others included the absence of international support as another explanation for the Republic's early demise. However, these reasons were external and were not taken in this paper.

### **Agoncillo and the Crisis of the Malolos Republic**

In the last chapter of the *Malolos: The Crisis of the Republic*, Agoncillo presented his analysis and critical comments on the fate of the Malolos Republic. He attributed the early death of the Repub-

lic not to the superiority and greatness of the Americans but to the policies, practices and attitudes of the Filipinos, particularly the wealthy and the intellectuals whom he blamed for the failure of the revolutionary movement to achieve its goal.

In his preface, Agoncillo (1960, ix) declared that the intellectuals and the wealthy, acting as fencesitters and saboteurs, betrayed the revolution. At the height of the 1896 revolution, the majority of the members of this class did not bother to lift a finger to lighten the burden of the revolutionaries who were fighting for independence. It was only after the defeat of the Spanish Armada on 1 May 1898 and when the tide was turning in favor of the revolutionaries, that the "haves" joined Aguinaldo's bandwagon. When Aguinaldo convened the Revolutionary Congress, many of them took the opportunity to position themselves in power. With this, the "haves" were successful in crippling the dictatorial powers of the president and in ousting Mabini from the cabinet and Luna from the military. Mabini and Luna were both considered too radical in their political stand, which was the reason why they were eliminated from the political scene.

Agoncillo also blamed Aguinaldo for putting too much trust and confidence in the promises and verbal commitments of some American diplomats and military officers. While Aguinaldo was in Hongkong and Singapore, he took seriously the declaration of Spencer Pratt and Rouseville Wildman as if they were speaking in behalf of the U.S. government. His trust in these two Americans was based on their statement that if Cuba, which is a neighbor of the United States, was given independence, how much more would the Philippines which is ten thousand miles away from the United States (Agoncillo 1960, 149). Moreover, Aguinaldo also accepted in good faith the idea that the Americans were motivated by humanitarian reasons when they interfered in the affairs of Cuba and the Philippines. He never realized the fact that their statements were purely their own personal opinions and as such did not represent the position of the American government.

After arriving from Hongkong, Aguinaldo continued to bank on the promises of the Americans. If Aguinaldo was only astute, he could have already figured out in advance that the Americans had no intention of leaving the Philippines. In the first place, the United States did not send any official representative when he declared Philippine independence on 12 June 1898. The Americans, therefore, were not bound to respect the declaration of independence by the Filipinos. Second, the continued sending of regular and volunteer troops

by the Americans should have alarmed Aguinaldo that the Americans were planning to stay and take full control of the country. Third, when the Americans took control of Intramuros, they refused to allow the Filipinos to enjoy the fruits of their victory. By that time, the Spaniards were already defeated and the Americans should have left the Philippines as soon as the surrender of Manila was consummated if indeed they were not interested in colonizing the Philippines. Despite all these developments however, Aguinaldo continued to bank on the *palabra de honor* of the Americans.

Aguinaldo's tolerance of and innocent faith on his military men also contributed to the crisis of the Republic. Wanting so much to unify the Filipinos in order to solidly fight against the colonizers, he did not punish and impose disciplinary sanctions on erring officials and soldiers. He was afraid that if he would do so, they might defect or abandon the revolutionary cause. For instance, the members of the Kawit battalion were accused of committing a lot of military brutalities and insubordination. They were also labeled as the men behind the death of Antonio Luna. Yet, despite all these excesses, there were no documents and other forms of testimony that would attest that they were dismissed by Aguinaldo.

Agoncillo also stated that the fall of the Republic might be attributed to the lack of arms and military discipline of the Filipinos. But even if the army had enough courageous men, if it did not have competent military leaders and sufficient arms, one cannot expect them to win a war. Agoncillo explained that the lack of discipline within the army may be ascribed to the fact that most of the members of the fighting corps came from the lower class whose sense of loyalty was based on regional and personal considerations. This is the reason why, in times of crisis, they would oftentimes decide not on the basis of principle but on the basis of personal relation. This fact was clearly seen in the behavior of the Kawit battalion who refused to recognize Gen. Antonio Luna on the ground that their officers took orders only from Aguinaldo. The question of personal loyalty and regionalism delayed the formation of a unified army that could offer strong resistance against the Americans.

According to Agoncillo (1960, 665), the most fundamental reason of the crisis of the Malolos Republic was the betrayal of the "haves". He pointed out that:

Foremost among the factors that contributed to this fall was the betrayal of the "haves". . . . When the "haves" stepped in to claim the

fruits of their hard-won victory, internal conflict followed and demoralization took its toll. Instead of suffering with and for the people, the leaders who had successfully isolated Mabini and "captured" Aguinaldo now attempted to despoil their own government of whatever means it had with which to sustain a balanced society ... The highly intellectuals among the "haves" on the other hand, considered it advantageous to themselves to submit to alien rule, for it meant recognition of their leadership in the social and economic fields.

One cannot blame Aguinaldo for allowing the "haves" to assume sensitive positions in his administration. He was humble enough to accept that by himself, and even with the help of his military generals, he could not attend to the military entanglements and administrative duties as President and Commander-in-Chief. Therefore, he found it convenient to allow the "haves" to assume sensitive position in his administration. Moreover, it was also his dream to unify the different classes in the society. Because of these, he enjoined Pedro Paterno, Cayetano Arellano, Benito Legarda, Gregorio Araneta, Trinidad Pardo de Tavera and Felipe Buencamino to enter his administration without considering the absence of patriotic sentiment of these men. Agoncillo (1960, 664) argued that they joined the government to take advantage of its power and to facilitate their ambition to enrich themselves.

Aguinaldo badly needed the services of these men because they were the ones who had the intellectual capability and financial resources to run the government. Unfortunately, when they joined the government, some of them already had secret deals with the Americans. A lot of them were sympathetic to the American propaganda of "benevolent assimilation". This was the primary reason why these men plotted the ouster of Mabini and Luna. Mabini and Luna had many differences, but the two shared one very important conviction; they wanted to work for Philippine independence.

The entry of the "haves" in the cluster of Aguinaldo's trusted men resulted in conflicts within his administration. The "haves" continued to encourage the government to accept American protectorate, while Mabini and Luna remained radical in their stand. As conflict normally ends in tragedy, the "haves" used their machinery and influence to eliminate their opponents. A few months after they assumed power, the Mabini cabinet was replaced and Luna was assassinated. With these, Aguinaldo's "captivity" was finally consummated. Thus, the advent of the collapse of the Malolos Republic drew to a close.

### **The Excesses of the Aguinaldo Administration**

Rizal in his socially relevant and highly political novel expressed his reservation as to whether the Filipinos were prepared to run the political affairs of the country.

why grant them independence? With Spain or without Spain they would always be the same and perhaps worse! Why independence, if the slaves of today will be the tyrants of tomorrow? ... when our people is unprepared, when it enters the fight through fraud and force, without clear understanding of what he is doing, the wisest attempt will fall (Rizal 1912, 361).

Rizal was apprehensive of the seeming unpreparedness of the Filipinos to take full charge of governmental functions. He was also worried about the absence of intellectual and moral maturity of the revolutionaries. It was clear in Rizal's view that the revolutionaries hated the tyrants and the corrupt Spanish officials, but it was not explicit whether they condemned tyranny and corruption as such. This might be the reason why in his conversation with Pio Valenzuela in Dapitan, Rizal suggested the creation of a school that would educate the Filipinos to prevent the "slaves" of today from becoming tyrants in the future (Valenzuela 1978, 95).

This article argues that Rizal's prophecies indeed materialized. There were indeed some former "slaves" in the Aguinaldo administration who later became tyrants in their own way. This phenomenon explained why in some places in the country, the appointees and representatives of the Aguinaldo administration were hated by the people. As such, the people remained hesitant to support Aguinaldo's program of government. The corruption and atrocities committed by Aguinaldo's men partly explained the early death of the Malolos Republic and the preference of some Filipinos to be put under American rule rather than under their fellow Filipinos.

### **The Case of Daniel Tirona**

Daniel Tirona was one of the trusted military generals of Emilio Aguinaldo. He was a law student when the revolution started in 1896. During the Tejeros Convention, he was the one who questioned the competence of Andres Bonifacio to hold the post of Secretary of Interior and recommended instead Jose del Rosario. He surrendered

to the Spaniards in Tanza after the amnesty proclamation was issued. When Aguinaldo returned from Hongkong in 1898, Tirona was appointed representative of the Revolutionary Government in the Cagayan Valley. In his stay in this region he manifested his selfishness and tendency to abuse the authority vested on him. His abuses while serving the Aguinaldo administration earned him the title "thief of the highest caliber" (Villa 1963, 27).

Lt. Manuel Guzman, a member of the ill-fated Tirona Battalion, reported to Aguinaldo that during Tirona's tour of duty in Cagayan Valley, a big robbery took place in the region. The house of a very rich resident of Tuguegarao was robbed of priceless jewels and a considerable amount of money. The perpetrators of this abominable act were never apprehended despite the investigation ordered by Tirona himself. Two months after the robbery, many people saw and testified that Tirona was wearing some of the jewelry lost in the robbery. Because of this, the people concluded that it was Tirona who orchestrated the robbery (Villa 1963, 28). Lt. Guzman said that Daniel Tirona also used his power to enrich himself and his trusted men. While in Cagayan, they monopolized the sale of prime commodities like rice, salt and petroleum products, thus resulting to an unprecedented increase of its prices. The monopoly was a lucrative business venture and after nine months, Tirona earned two hundred thousand pesos and his officers about twenty five thousand pesos each (Villa 1963, 28).

The bishop of Nueva Segovia, Msgr. Jose Hevia de Campomanes also corroborated the accounts of the atrocities committed by the Tirona Battalion. In his testimony to the Taft Commission, he narrated his painful and humiliating experience while they were held prisoner by Tirona. He mentioned that he was kicked in the stomach by Tirona several times when he refused to ordain some native priests who had not yet satisfied the requirements of priesthood. He also testified that many of the priests were assaulted and robbed by Tirona and his men (Achutegui and Bernad 1960, 30). Taylor on his part mentioned that these atrocities were committed by Tirona against the friars for the purpose of extorting money from them, for it was believed that they had hidden funds instead of turning them over to Aguinaldo's men (Taylor 1971, 2:92).

The atrocities committed by the Tirona Battalion in Cagayan severely damaged the image not only of Tirona as military governor of Cagayan but also of Aguinaldo whom Tirona was representing. The residents of this region hated them more than they hated the



Spaniards. When they were about to board the sea vessel that would bring them to Manila after Tirona surrendered to the Americans, some passengers aboard the same ship shouted at them with these words:

Out with the shameless and with the thieves, Out! We will kill them: out, out, out, out with those robbers! The unhappy officers, seeing the attitude of the Spaniards towards them, retreated without answering a word because what they had shouted was the truth (Villa 1963, 28).

The case of Daniel Tirona was a classic example of the excesses committed by Aguinaldo's men. If one goes over the collection of Taylor, one finds that Tirona's abuses were not isolated cases. For instance, in his letter to Aguinaldo, Teodoro Sandico reported several abuses committed by Aguinaldo's men. Murder, theft and kidnapping were some of the common crimes committed by the revolutionaries (Taylor 1971, 3:372). One case that he reported to Aguinaldo was the robbery committed against Señor Dueñas. It was alleged that the carriage of Señor Dueñas was stolen by his driver and later it was handed over to General Pio del Pilar. When the owner demanded that his carriage be returned to him, Del Pilar replied that he would only do so if there was an order coming from the central government. A similar case also happened when a *quilez* of a school teacher from Concepcion was taken by Major Carmona. When the owner tried to recover it, he was arrested on the ground that he was a spy of the Spanish government (Taylor 1971, 3:372).

Colonel Leyba also had a similar experience with the Kawit Battalion while they were in Aparri. In his letter to Aguinaldo, he reported that the Kawit soldiers committed a scandalous robbery of twenty thousand eight hundred pesos from Otto Weber, a German national. It surfaced in the inquiry that Leyba conducted that the amount of ten thousand pesos was buried under the quarters of the soldiers. Leyba suspected that the officers were aware of the incident because it was impossible for such a large sum of money to be brought into the house in the presence of so many soldiers without the knowledge of the officers. Based on this findings, Leyba made this assessment and recommendation:

As the officers are the first ones to commit abuses and misdeeds, it is easily seen that the soldiers under the orders, guided by them, will commit worse ones than the chiefs, and as those seem to lack the moral strength to control and reprimand them, I propose to you, if it meets your approval, that all these soldiers and some of the officers be returned to their homes (Taylor 1971, 3:640).

The injustice committed against the right to private property was one of the atrocities that the revolutionaries committed during the Philippine Revolution (26). What was abominable was that some were committed against fellow Filipinos. Mabini partly blamed Aguinaldo for the abuses that his men committed. In the conclusion of his essay *The Rise and Fall of the Philippine Revolution* (26) he expressed his disappointment of Aguinaldo's administration:

I cannot end these observations to my countrymen without remarking on the immense disappointment I felt whenever I heard of deeds of violence committed by Filipino soldiers against their own countrywomen. I confess that these are isolated cases, too difficult to be avoided in times of general turmoil and free overflowing of passions; but I am sure that the first case would not have been repeated had the competent chief repressed such outrage from the start with energy and without condonation.

These excesses committed by Aguinaldo's men partly explained why the Malolos Republic did not last long. Many Filipinos who experienced their abuses gradually refused to contribute to the revolutionary cause. Consequently, the Aguinaldo administration was not able to mobilize much mass support to advance the interest of the Filipinos at the height of the Filipino-American War

### **Sequestration or Robbery**

The right to private property was one of the rights of man that was clearly codified in the Malolos Constitution. The two articles that elaborated this right contained the following provisions:

Art. 16. No one shall be temporarily or permanently deprived of rights or disturbed in his enjoyment thereof by virtue of judicial sentence.

Art. 17. No one shall be deprived of his property by appropriation except on grounds of public necessity and benefit, previously declared and justified by proper authority and indemnifying the owner thereof prior to expropriation (Guevarra 1972, 107).

These provisions guaranteeing the property rights of the people particularly the non-combatants, was de-emphasized because of the financial problems encountered by the Aguinaldo administration. Aguinaldo did not receive financial support from any foreign country. This was the reason why he had to generate funds from within to finance the expenses of the government and the men in the field.

To alleviate the financial problems besetting the revolutionary government, the Aguinaldo administration appropriated the property of the Spaniards, particularly the friars. On 20 June 1898, Aguinaldo issued a guideline as to the manner in which the government would deal with the property of the enemies which they considered "booty of war." In this circular, he ordered the chief of the town to take charge of all the properties left by the Spaniards. The chief of the town was required to make a detailed inventory of these properties and the final copy of this inventory should be sent to the national government (Taylor 1971, 3:120-21).

In an earlier circular, dated 24 May 1898, Aguinaldo cautioned his men that "the lives and property of the foreigners, Chinese being included in this denomination, shall be respected, as well as that of all Spaniards, who neither directly or indirectly contributed to carry on war against us" (Taylor 1971, 3:32). This precaution was issued in order not to antagonize those countries whose support and recognition Aguinaldo needed badly. On 23 June 1898, he created the office of the Department of Treasury which would take charge of the administration of confiscated properties.

Despite all these provisions in the constitution and the circulars that Aguinaldo issued, the conduct of the confiscation of the enemy's property resulted in many abuses that shattered the image and integrity of the Aguinaldo administration. In many provinces, particularly in the province of Cavite, one of the very first acts of the revolutionaries was to burn the *Casa Tribunal* to destroy the land titles and other records of the Spanish administration (Taylor 1971, 2:39). They thought that by doing so, the landowners would no longer have legal document to claim ownership of the land.

In the different circulars issued by Aguinaldo, it was clear that the confiscated property should become the property of the state. These confiscated properties were never intended to serve as rewards for those men who joined the revolution. However, when Aguinaldo's men implemented the circulars, they took it as their license to loot the property of the churches, the friar estates and the rich families. Taylor (1971, 2:453) summarized these acts of the revolutionaries in these words:

The funds of the insurgent government were considered the property of the men who had established it and not as trust to be managed for the benefit of the people of the country. The islands of the archipelago were looked upon as the private estate of the head of the government and of the men who immediately surrounded him.

The management of war booty also affected negatively the relationship of the members of the national government and the local chiefs. In some instances, the local chiefs did not want to turn over the confiscated properties to the national government. There was a case wherein a commissioner was sent to Baliwag, Bulacan to take possession of a piece of property owned by a Spaniard who had died. When the commissioner arrived in the locality, the property was already under the possession of the military commander stationed in the town. The commander informed the commissioner that if he would attempt to interfere with his possession, he would blow his brain out (Taylor 1971, 2:458). After hearing this, the commissioner went back to the capital and reported the incident to the Secretary of War who did not do anything to punish his subordinate.

The appropriation of confiscated property for personal use was not only common among local leaders and the ground troops. This practice existed up to the upper echelon of the Aguinaldo administration. There was even an account that "the house of Aguinaldo and his generals were furnished from the belongings of the Spaniards" (Taylor 1971, 2:96). These abuses committed by the Aguinaldo administration might be the reason why Taylor remarked that the rebellion that happened before the turn of the century was an "attempt of a group of men to seize the country and direct its destinies for their own purpose" (Taylor 1971, 2:372). This malpractice negatively affected the image of the revolutionary government, not only in the eyes of the Filipinos but also of the foreigners as well. This point was articulated by Teodoro Sandico in his letter to Aguinaldo wherein he said:

I regret very much to have to inform you that as long as personal property is not respected here in Manila especially, by some of our men, as long as personal security does not exist as long as prisoners are tortured, we cannot hope to deserve the confidence of the other governments (Taylor 1971, 3:372).

The abuses committed by the Aguinaldo administration partly contributed to the early death of the Malolos Republic. These abuses destroyed the image of the revolutionary government before the eyes of the Filipinos and the international community. These developments confirmed the prophecy of Rizal that without proper guidance, preparation and education, the slaves of today would become the tyrants of tomorrow.

### **Taxation and Corruption**

When Aguinaldo established the dictatorial government after he arrived from Hongkong, one of the questions that haunted him was how to finance the expenses of the government. The dictatorial government badly needed money to buy arms and to support the expenses of the troops and the hierarchy. To remedy the situation, Aguinaldo resorted to taxation to generate funds. However, this move did not solve the problem completely because of various obstacles and difficulties. First, a large portion of the population did not have fixed income and they had no means to pay taxes. Many of them became jobless because of the political disturbances brought about by the revolution. Second, the wealthy families did not have much sympathy with the revolution. Unless they were intimidated and coerced, most of them did not give any financial contribution. Lastly, the government lacked competent men who would assess and collect taxes (Agoncillo 1960, 256).

One major source of income for the revolutionary government was the proceeds from the sale of the property taken from the Spaniards. The government also demanded a share in the payments collected by the priests for administering the sacraments. In order not to impoverish the clergy, Secretary of Interior Leandro Ibarra issued an order allowing the Filipino clergy to charge their parishioners according to the norms laid down by Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Sta. Justa y Rufina in 1772 (Taylor 1971, 3:215). The proceeds coming from the sequestered property and the share in the income of the parish priest partly solved the financial problem of the government.

The revolutionary government also taxed the tenants of the former friar estates. In a circular dated 11 August 1898, Mariano Trias ordered that the tenants of the friar estates confiscated by the government should pay one-half of the rent which they formerly paid to the friars (Taylor 1971, 3:211). To generate more funds, the circular was given retroactive effectivity starting from the last time the tenants made the last payment. To ensure the regular supply of food for the troops in the field, Cayetano Topacio imposed a levy on the rice harvest. Farmers were required to give half of their harvest to the government. Later, as the need became greater, the amount that the farmers were required to give was increased to two-thirds (Achutegui and Bernad 1972, 189).

To ask the farmers to donate two-thirds of their harvest was something that was exorbitant and unjust. During the time of the Spaniards,

it was precisely the excessive rent and the taxes that the Spaniards collected which antagonized the farmers. With the defeat of the Spaniards, the farmers were expecting that they would be relieved from these burdens. But contrary to their expectations, they were taxed more than what they gave to the Spaniards during the colonial years. The circular of Cayetano Topacio only aggravated the plight of the farmers. With this anti-farmer ordinance, one can understand the reason why the Malolos Republic did not get enough support from the agricultural sector.

On 19 February 1899, Aguinaldo deemed it necessary to abolish the collection of *cedula personal* which was a symbol of Spanish oppression. To replace it, a special war tax called "Certificate of Citizenship" was imposed. The amount of tax that one would give is based on the person's property holdings (Taylor 1971, 4:309). In addition to this, Aguinaldo also imposed five percent tax on goods exported directly to foreign countries and a duty of five percent *ad valorem* on imported products. All of these were imposed to give the government enough money to maintain its personnel and operations (Taylor 1971, 3:563).

There was no major controversy as to the taxes imposed by the revolutionary government. The controversy centered on how the taxes were collected. Table 1 and 2 give an idea whether the taxation imposed by Aguinaldo was fairly implemented.

Table 1. Contribution to the War

| Province         |   | Amount (in pesos) |
|------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. Manila        | = | 53,462.87         |
| 2. Pangasinan    | = | 42,038.51         |
| 3. Laguna        | = | 41,222.25         |
| 4. Ilocos Norte  | = | 33,530.00         |
| 5. Miscellaneous | = | 32,500.68         |
| 6. Bulacan       | = | 18,299.40         |
| 7. Batangas      | = | 16,355 .06        |
| 8. Pampanga      | = | 14,338.50         |
| 9. La Union      | = | 12,583.50         |
| 10. Masbate      | = | 10,815.17         |
| 11. Zambales     | = | 7,458.88          |
| 12. Tarlac       | = | 6,869.43          |
| 13. Mindoro      | = | 6,223.50          |
| 14. Cavite       | = | 3,980.50          |

Source: Taylor (1971, 3:563)

Table 2. War Tax Collection

| Province        |   | Amount (in pesos) |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. Cagayan      | = | 136,467.00        |
| 2. Laguna       | = | 53,250.00         |
| 3. Pangasinan   | = | 26,510.04         |
| 4. Camarines    | = | 25,000.00         |
| 5. Romblon      | = | 22,765.21         |
| 6. Bulacan      | = | 20,218.50         |
| 7. Batangas     | = | 19,478.94         |
| 8. Ilocos       | = | 10,000.00         |
| 9. La Union     | = | 8,134.00          |
| 10. Mindoro     | = | 6,809.92          |
| 11. Tarlac      | = | 6,600.00          |
| 12. Albay       | = | 5,966.03          |
| 13. Morong      | = | 5,470.00          |
| 14. Nueva Ecija | = | 3,968.12          |
| 15. Tayabas     | = | 2,536.12          |
| 16. Bataan      | = | 1,785.00          |
| 17. Zambales    | = | 1,593.00          |
| 18. Cavite      | = | 1,481.47          |

Source: Taylor (1971, 3:469)

In the original list of Taylor, the provinces were arranged at random. In tables 1 and 2, the provinces were deliberately arranged according to the amount of money they contributed to the government. This is to accentuate the point that Cavite did not give much to the revolutionary cause. One should note that the war tax was based on the property owned by the citizen. It is known to many that Cavite during this period was one of the richest provinces in the Philippines. In this province, one would find productive haciendas, shipyards, military installations, ports and many other business establishments. There were also many Caviteños who had access to professional education in Manila. All of these point to the fact that the province of Cavite was prosperous with many rich residents. Despite this, the Caviteños contributed very little to the revolutionary cause. One cannot avoid to speculate that many did not pay their obligation. Either they did not pay their taxes or, if ever they paid, it did not reach the national treasury. On the part of Aguinaldo, there are no documents and testimonies that would attest that he made no move to collect the taxes fairly, particularly in his home province. This

fact further justified the point of Agoncillo that Cavitismo was one of the political biases of Aguinaldo.

Aside from tax evasion, Aguinaldo's men were also suspected of pocketing some of the taxes and the other confiscated properties of the enemies for themselves. For instance, Jose Ignacio Pawa was suspected of retaining two percent of the amount he collected from the people, a charge that he vehemently denied in his letter to Aguinaldo, dated 6 July 1899 (Taylor 1971, 3:154). A variation of this also happened in Isabela. On 2 February 1899, the Secretary of the Treasury informed the governor of Isabela that the property of the enemies should be confiscated. He also requested the governor to have an inventory of the sequestered property. In the month of July 1899, no confiscated property and inventory was found in Isabela (Taylor 1971, 2:97).

John Taylor made an interesting comment on the original cash books of the revolutionaries when he noticed that in most cases the revolutionaries used pencil in entering the amount (Taylor 1971, 2:483). One would suspect that they were doing this so that they would find it easier to manipulate the figures if they would wish to do so. Indeed there were a number of accounts testifying that there were some revolutionaries who were engaged in corrupt practices.

The last malpractice happened in Pasig and Gen. Pio del Pilar was the person involved. Bonifacio Arevalo wrote to Aguinaldo that monte gambling was rampant in Pasig because it was authorized by Gen. Pio del Pilar. The letter alleged that the proceeds received by the general were used to maintain his mistress who resided in Pasig (Taylor 1971, 4:73).

All of these abuses and corruption committed by the revolutionaries did not do any good to their cause. Instead, it further alienated them from the people. The people lost their interest in financing them because they noticed that their hard earned money did not go to a noble cause. The corruption and arrogance of Aguinaldo's men further eroded the trust and legitimacy that the revolutionary leaders badly needed in this critical time.

### **The Revolution and the Filipino Clergy**

The friars might have committed a lot of abuses against the Filipinos, but the faith that they impressed was so deeply rooted in the minds and hearts of the Filipinos. If one reads the writings of the propagandists and the revolutionaries, it is clear that their hatred was



primarily directed against the Spanish friars and not against the Church. Essentially, the attacks against the friars centered on their role as political administrators, educators, landowners and ministers of the sacraments. Jacob Schurman (1902, 77) explained the anti-friar feelings of the Filipinos in these lines:

I say nothing to the charge of immorality which in all probability has been much exaggerated. It was rather I believed, as victims of institutions that the friars acquired the hostility of the natives. They were not only Spanish, but they were the real administrators of the Spanish government in the archipelago; and the Filipinos charged them with the injustice, cruelty and oppression in which the government issued.

A serious study of the religious side of the revolution must distinguish the friars who were mostly Spaniards and the secular clergy who were mostly Filipinos (Schumacher 1981). One should also not confuse anti-friar sentiment with anti-clerical, anti-religion and anti-Catholic sentiment. There were numerous documents that would attest that the revolutionaries hated the friars, but whether this feeling extended to the whole Church is very hard to establish.

### **The Religious Character of the Revolution**

From the outbreak of the revolution, Aguinaldo displayed religious bias in favor of the Catholic Church. His qualified hatred of the friars did not obscure his deep faith in Catholicism. Unlike Bonifacio and other Magdiwang members, Aguinaldo and other Magdalo members remained religious. In fact, one of the early causes of the rift between Aguinaldo and Bonifacio originated from the decision of Bonifacio to execute Fathers Agapito Echegoyen and Domingo Cardeñas. They were the priests handed over by Aguinaldo to the Magdiwang camp for safekeeping. When Aguinaldo learned of their execution, he protested that the two priests did not commit grave misconduct to deserve the death penalty.

At the height of the revolution, the Magdalo camp continued to display their deep faith. In a circular to the military commanders and town presidents, Aguinaldo ordered the people to pray the novenas because he believed that their prayers were powerful weapons against the enemies (Achutegui and Bernad 1972, 118; Schumacher 1976, 399–416). These clearly demonstrated that even at the height of the revolution, the hatred of the Filipinos against the friars and the Spaniards

did not affect negatively their faith in the religion that these people introduced. The Filipinos, including the revolutionaries, continued to practice their Christian faith even if they knew that the ministers of this religion were part of the cause of their sufferings. Hence, Aguinaldo cooperated with the Filipino clergy in order not to deprive the country of religious leaders.

The alliance of Aguinaldo and the secular clergy was mutually beneficial. The revolutionary government needed the secular clergy because they could serve as replacement for the beleaguered friars. Moreover, Aguinaldo also realized that the secular clergy could also contribute financially to the cause of the revolution. The Church as an institution had the money and the resources that could be used by the government. The issue on sacramental fees was one of the rallying points that the propagandists used against the friars. But at this point, Aguinaldo had to forget this for him to avail the financial help coming from the Filipino clergy. Furthermore, the secular clergy could also be tapped to serve as the propaganda arm of the revolution. Being educated, they could also serve as advisers in formulating national policies. The government could learn from them how to mobilize mass support and handle people of different characters. Because of this, Aguinaldo found it beneficial to collaborate with the Filipino secular clergy.

On July 1898, the secular clergy loyal to Aguinaldo were ordered by the government to urge their parishioners to support the revolution (Achutegui and Bernad 1972, 118; Schumacher 1976, 399-416). They were advised to propagate nationalism and justify the legitimacy of the Aguinaldo administration. They were also tasked to provide intelligence reports for the military tacticians.

The most prominent secular priest who collaborated with the revolutionaries was Fr. Gregorio Aglipay y Labayan. He was highly favored by Aguinaldo because of his all out support to his administration. First, he used his influence to encourage the priests in the diocese of Nueva Segovia to rally behind Aguinaldo. Second, as a concrete manifestation of his loyalty to the revolution, he encouraged the secular clergy and their parishioners to extend financial contributions to the Malolos government. Third, he was instrumental in neutralizing the counter-revolutionary movement of the *Guardia de Honor* in Tarlac and Pangasinan. Fourth, he played an active role in the program of education of the Malolos government. Aside from this, he was also instrumental in channeling the funds of the Church

for the use of the revolutionaries (Schumacher 1981, 97–101). As a reward for all these favors, Aguinaldo appointed him *Vicario General Castrense*, government commissioner in Ilocos and representative of Ilocos Norte in the Malolos Congress.

Both Mabini and Aguinaldo were not that radical in their religious policies. It was enough for them for the friars be expelled from the country. They did not see any serious contradiction if theocratic government would still continue, so long as the clergy would recognize the authority of the Aguinaldo administration. In fact, Mabini and Aglipay even conceived of a National Church run by the Filipino clergy (Majul 1960, 330–61). The creation of a National Church was an expedient response to the needs of the time, because it would do away with the Spanish friars who dominated the Church and at the same time it would preserve the Catholic religion for the many people who were still loyal to it. One distinguishing mark of the National Church was that, it was loyal to the Aguinaldo government and not to the Archbishop. The three reasons for the creation of the National Church were enumerated by Majul (1960, 344) in these lines:

The establishment of the National Church was essentially a compromise solution. It sought to accomplish various ends. The first of this had to do with the recognition of the significant role of the clergy in both the reform movement and the actual revolution. The second had to do with the religious sensibilities of the majority of the Filipinos. The third had to do with the protection of the gains of the revolution and the fear of reverting to certain institutional patterns.

In the early part of the history of the Malolos Republic, the Aguinaldo administration was still open to the possibility of adopting a government that would work closely with the Church. However, when the educated and the wealthy Filipinos gained prominence in the Malolos Republic, they started to dislodge the clergy from the government by advocating the separation of the Church and the State. These people believed that the Church and the state should exist and function independently from each other.

### **The Eclipse of the Filipino Clergy**

The gradual ascendance of the ilustrados and the wealthy in the cluster of Aguinaldo's trusted allies, dislodged not only Mabini and

Luna but the Filipino clergy as well. It all started when Aguinaldo allowed the Malolos Congress to serve not only as an advisory body but also as an institution for policy making and legislation. In the decrees dated 18 June 1898 and 23 June 1898, there was no explicit and categorical stipulation that Aguinaldo ordered the Revolutionary Congress to frame a constitution (Taylor 1971, 3:113-16, 134-41). But in the message delivered by Aguinaldo during the opening session of the Malolos Congress on 15 September 1898, he advised the members of the Assembly "to write with their votes the immortal book of the Filipino Constitution as the supreme expression of the National Will" (Taylor 1971, 3:134-41). With this exhortation, the ilustrado dominated Congress placed in their agenda the formulation of a constitution that would define the function of the executive and other offices.

Mabini from the very beginning expressed his opinion that in that time of political crisis, it was not yet advisable for Congress to frame a constitution. Its ideal function was to advise the President of the revolutionary government in matters of great importance. Mabini believed that in times of war, power should be concentrated on the executive to ensure swift action (Taylor 1971, 3:355). Agoncillo remarked that the June 1898 decrees which withheld the power of Congress to frame a constitution were authored by Mabini while the 15 September 1898 inaugural speech was written by Felipe Buencamino. Hence, it contained provisions in favor of the formulation of a constitution (Agoncillo 1960, 294-95). Despite the fact that Mabini's view would benefit the President, Aguinaldo did not buy the idea. He accommodated the will of the representatives in order to win the support of the intellectuals and the wealthy. For him this move would result in the consolidation of the forces of the country and it would generate good impression from foreign governments whose support he badly needed.

One very sensitive issue that almost polarized the members of the Malolos Congress was the issue of the relationship of the Church and the state. When the issue was under deliberation, attendance was remarkably high and many delegates wanted to take the floor to deliver their piece. The issue of the separation of the Church and the state also created unexpected alliances from the different factions of the government. For instance, Mabini who was a devout mason joined Calderon in lobbying against the separation issue. These developments supported the fact that during this critical period, the Church was still a very powerful institution to contend with.

The original draft of Calderon contained three articles touching the issue of religion. They were:

Art. 5: The nation shall protect the cult and minister of the Roman Catholic Apostolic religion, which is the religion of the state and shall not use its revenue for the expense of any cult.

Art. 6: Any other cult may be practiced privately, provided that it is not contrary to the morals and good customs, and does not subvert the security of the nation.

Art. 7: The enjoyment and the discharge of the duties and official function in the Republic, as well as the acquisitive and exercise of civil and political rights, shall be independent of the religion of the Filipinos (Agoncillo 1960, 298).

Delegate Tomas del Rosario eloquently attacked the draft of Calderon and proposed that the state should recognize the freedom and equality of all cults and the separation of the Church and the State. He pointed out that for several centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had been the instrument of discontent, of misery and dishonor of the entire families in the Philippines (Agoncillo 1960, 299). Del Rosario also added that if the state would adopt Catholicism as its religion, it would be tantamount to creating a state within a state. The group of Del Rosario also accused the camp of Calderon for being pawns of the friars and traitors to the cause of the revolution. Delegate Arcadio del Rosario, on his part, argued that the decadence of Spain sprung principally from the negation of religious freedom and the predominance of the clerics.

Calderon (1991, 28) on his part argued that the separation of the Church and the state would outrage and isolate many Filipinos who were devout Catholics. He also invoked the names of Fathers Gomez, Burgos, Zamora and Pelaez who shed their blood for the welfare of the country. Then he said that the patriotism of the Filipino clergy was more than enough evidence to show that they were not there to usurp power. Calderon further reiterated that the separation of the Church and the state was a "pure utopia" (LeRoy 1914, 317). It was only possible on the level of pure reason but never in reality. He believed that politics and religion during those times were closely intertwined in the minds and hearts of the Filipinos. Finally, Calderon concluded that it was just and proper that Catholicism be the official religion of the state because a majority of the Filipinos were Catholics.

After presenting their positions, a call was made for the religious issue to be put into vote. The first round of voting ended with a tie: twenty-five voted in favor of the separation provision and the same number voted in favor of Calderon's draft. The tie would have been broken if Pedro Paterno, the president of Congress voted in favor of the conservatives. However, he refrained from doing so in order not to antagonize the radicals and the masons. Because of this, a second voting was called. The tie was finally broken when Pablo Tecson, the Secretary of Congress voted in favor of the separation. With this, Article 5, Title 3 was adopted with these wordings: "The State recognizes the freedom and equality of all religion, as well as the separation of the Church and the State" (Guevarra 1972, 118).

The separation of the Church and the state was one of the policies of the Malolos Republic that demoralized the Filipino clergy to support the revolution. Calderon (1991, 30) in his memoirs provided us with a description of the reaction and disappointment of the Filipino clergy:

The attitude of those who voted for the absolute separation of the Church and the state gave rise to much displeasure among the Filipino clergy, and I then began to notice among them a certain reluctance to take any part in the public affairs.

Another policy of the Republic that produced similar result was the ordinance on civil marriage. It was a common practice during that time that the technicalities and other formalities of marriage were primarily put under the jurisdiction of the Church. On 20 June 1898, Aguinaldo issued a decree creating the Office of the Commissioner of Justice. Part of the job of this office was to implement the technicalities and other formalities that must be followed before a marriage contract becomes lawful. Under Rule 29 of the said circular, no priest should celebrate a canonical marriage unless the two parties have already satisfied the requirements of the decree (Taylor 1971, 3:121). Failure to comply with this requirement would mean that the marriage would not be valid in the eyes of the law.

The institutionalization of civil marriage was one of the policies implemented by Aguinaldo that the secular clergy did not welcome. There were instances wherein the clergy did not solemnize the marriage of those who were civilly married and there were cases wherein priests performed canonical marriage even if the parties did not satisfy the legal requirements (Schumacher 1981, 80). In his legal opinion to

the query of the provincial chief of Pangasinan, Gregorio Araneta asserted that priests were not legally liable if they performed religious marriage without requiring the parties to undergo civil marriage first. He also added that the people should only be counseled and not obliged to have a civil marriage before the religious marriage (Taylor 1971, 3:619). This opinion of the Secretary of Justice partly defused the tension between the local executive who wanted to rule over the policies of the Church and the parish priests.

It can be inferred from the discussion that there were members of the Aguinaldo administration who did not realize the value of the Filipino clergy. They were not aware that the Filipino clergy possessed significant resources that could be used as a propaganda arm of the revolution. Aside from Aglipay and Roxas, there were very few members of the Filipino clergy from other parts of the country who were recognized and used by the revolutionaries to join their rank. Instead of winning the sympathy of the Filipino clergy, the Malolos government alienated itself from them through systematic legislation.

## Conclusion

One of the basic requirements for a political revolution to succeed is mass support. A revolution may start with a handful of radicals but, as it progresses, it must win the support of the people. As soon as hostilities start, it must offer an alternative that is more acceptable than the status quo that it tries to overthrow. Moreover, revolutionaries must have an adequate and effective propaganda arm that will disseminate their ideas and advance the cause that they are fighting for. Normally, if these requirements are not satisfied, the revolution simply dies out.

The early death of the Malolos Republic could be explained by various reasons. The superior military hardware and tactics of the Americans could partly explain why the half-baked and disorganized Filipino army was easily defeated by the American troops. By the time the Filipino-American War broke out, several Filipinos were already exhausted after several years of fighting with the Spaniards. The absence of foreign assistance was another factor that contributed to the early death of the Malolos government.

The early downfall of the Malolos government could be partly attributed to the leadership of Aguinaldo and the actions of some of

his trusted men. The leadership of Aguinaldo did not offer an acceptable alternative that could have encouraged the Filipinos to rally behind him. Hence, when the Americans came, many Filipinos preferred to accept their "benevolent assimilation" propaganda and turned their backs away from the Malolos Republic. Moreover, Aguinaldo also failed to inspire the Filipinos to endure the cost and sufferings of being independent. The reason for this was that, the revolutionaries themselves did not set a good example for the people. Agoncillo (1960, 664) expressed this point bitterly in these lines:

A corrupt leadership, a leadership that is afraid to suffer, would materially produce a people incapable of sufferings. For in the last analysis, what the leaders are, so are the people. The people cannot be expected to offer whatever they have as sacrifice if the leaders themselves are not imbued with the spirit of self abnegation.

The atrocities committed by some military commanders contributed to the erosion of the people's trust in Aguinaldo's leadership. The abuses committed by Daniel Tirona, Pio del Pilar, the Kawit Battalion and other local executives were only some of the documented excesses that alienated the Malolos Republic from the people. Their arbitrary sequestration of the properties of the enemies also created problems within the rank itself. Many of them felt jealous and envious as to whom the confiscated properties would go. Many of Aguinaldo's men thought that the confiscated properties were the rewards due to them for joining the revolution. Instead of using them to finance the revolution, they appropriated them for their personal benefit. Consequently, the people did not see any radical difference between the time of the Spaniards and after the revolution. Both periods displayed greed, abuse of authority and opportunism.

A lot has already been written as to the financial problems of the Malolos Republic. But only a few mentioned that the Aguinaldo administration was partly to be blamed for the occurrence of the problem. Indeed it was true that the Malolos Republic did not receive foreign assistance and the taxes coming from the people were not enough to finance the expenses of the government. What made things worse was that many of the resources that could have been used by the government were appropriated for personal use. Some unscrupulous collectors pocketed a lot of the money collected from the people. Lastly, tax evasion was also rampant, particularly in the province of Cavite. Aguinaldo should have encouraged his



provincemates to set an example by paying diligently their tax liabilities. What happened was, Cavite ranked 18th in the tabulation of provinces who paid war tax. With this, how could one expect other Filipinos to contribute to the revolutionary cause if the persons advocating it did not want to share the burden of financing it in the first place?

The religious policies of the Malolos Republic were another factor that contributed to its early downfall. Indeed, it was true that the Philippine Revolution was a movement against the Spanish friars. But throughout the whole duration of the revolution, the Filipinos remained loyal to the Catholic religion. Initially, Aguinaldo had the right thing in mind when he took Gregorio Aglipay and other Filipino priests to serve as preachers of the ideal of the Revolution. But after the Malolos Congress was convened, Aguinaldo gradually abandoned the Filipino clergy in favor of the wealthy and educated Filipinos. His break up with the Filipino clergy started when he passed the decree on civil marriage and when the Malolos Congress voted in favor of the separation of the Church and the State. Though Aguinaldo suspended the effectivity of the separation provision, nevertheless, it created an impression that the Malolos Republic wanted to live a life independent and separate from the Catholic Church.

This break up of the Malolos Republic and the Malolos Government was a tactical mistake on the part of Aguinaldo. At that critical moment, Aguinaldo badly needed the financial and popular support of the Filipino clergy. With the break up, Aguinaldo lost an ally whose loyalty and patriotism was much stronger than that of the "haves." Moreover, Aguinaldo also lost one of the most effective media that could be used to sustain the support of the masses. Taking all these into consideration, one will no longer doubt why the Malolos Republic lasted only for a number of months.

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