

# philippine studies

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

---

## **A Filipino Editorial on the French Revolution**

Florentino H. Hornedo

*Philippine Studies* vol. 39, no. 2 (1991): 208–211

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](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

## Texts and Documents

### A Filipino Editorial on the French Revolution

FLORENTINO H. HORNEDO

The document presented here was published as an editorial in the seventh issue of the Reformist paper *La Solidaridad* on 15 May 1889. It is one of those textual evidences of the extent to which the liberalism of the French Revolution nursed the notions of freedom and democracy among the Philippine Reformists and eventually the Revolutionists, Bonifacio among them.

As the text will show, the occasion for the editorial was the centennial celebration of the French Revolution. *La Solidaridad* was founded in that centennial year and published in Barcelona. The first number bore the date 15 February 1889.

The editorial in the first issue, titled "Nuestros Propositos" ("Our Aims"), said that the paper's aims were

. . . combatir toda reaccion, impedir todo retroceso, aplaudir, aceptar toda idea liberal, defender todo progreso; en una palabra: un propagandista mas de todos los ideales de la democracia, aspirando que impere en todos los pueblos de aquende y allende los mares.

Los fines, pues, de LA SOLIDARIDAD estan definidos en recoger, recopilar, las ideas redentoras que diariamente se vierten en el campo de la politica, en los terrenos de las ciencias, artes, letras, comercio, agricultura e industria.

. . . to combat all reaction, to impede every retrogression, to applaud, to accept every liberal idea, to defend all progress; in brief, to be a propagandist above all of all the ideals of democracy so that these may reign in all nations here and overseas.

The aims, therefore, of *La Solidaridad* are to gather, to collect liberative ideas which are scattered everyday in the fields of politics, sciences, arts, letters, commerce, agriculture, and industry.

To call further attention to the liberalist character of the paper (The editorial byline was "La Redaccion"), the editorial later invoked "los primeros albores de nuestra era constitucional ("the first dawns of our constitutional era") and specified the Spanish constitutional assembly of 1812 which provided for Philippine representation in the Cortes and which was later revoked. That constitutionalism was also inspired by the French Revolution and its notion of the "rule of law" as against the "rule of man" represented by traditional Spanish royal absolutism. The perception of the Reformists was that the Philippines was still the victim of absolutism and urgently demanded all *ideas redentoras*.

The document translated here is titled "La Revolucion Francesa." It is unsigned. Did Graciano Lopez Jaena write it? Marcelo del Pilar? Or perhaps Jose Rizal whose article "Los Viajes" (signed "Laon Laan") appears in the same issue? One thing certain is that the tenor and theme of the editorial is consistent with the known writings of the best of the reformists, although had Rizal written it, the style and rhetoric could have been more polished. (Read his already cited "Los Viajes" for example.) On the other hand, it has some of the wordiness and bombast Lopez Jaena shows in his "Discurso" at the Ateneo Barcelones on 25 February 1889, which appeared in the second issue of *La Solidaridad* (28 February 1889, pp. 9ff.) This and the first editorial were probably from the pen of Lopez Jaena, though not necessarily by him alone.

#### THE TEXT

#### LA REVOLUCION FRANCESA

Hace cien anos que un acontecimiento verificado en el seno del pueblo frances ha conmovido al mundo. Saludemos, como buenos democratas, a aquella gran Revolucion francesa y a su inmortal Asamblea, que ha cambiado la faz del mundo y la historia de los siglos.

Sin ella, sin aquella Revolucion aun la humanidad entera yaceria en el mas hediondo oscurantismo y dominada por la ferrea mano de instituciones vetustas, tiranas; sin ella, aun no gozariamos del hermoso espectaculo que presentan las conquistas de las ciencias muy especialmente fisicas y quimicas, cuyas manifestaciones han dado un solemne mentis a las adustas aservaciones de algunas verdades en algun tiempo tenidas por reveladas.

Nos asombra como aquella Asamblea en medio de grandes tempestades y de rudos ataques, que recibiera de la aristocracia prostituida unida con la envidiada clerecia, haya podido hacer temblar y haya podido hacer caer de la cabeza de un rey aquella corona por cien generaciones venerada; nos place recordar aquella solemne fulminacion lanzada por el gran Mirabeau contra

los privilegios, las absurdas creencias que la aristocracia y el rey han de ser siempre los señores y el pueblo esclavo; nos causa júbilo recordar aquella solemne sesión del 5 de Mayo, en que sancionó la soberanía del pueblo tantas veces escarnecido y vejado.

Aquellos recuerdos constituyen un vivo ejemplo para los fervientes demócratas esclavizados aun por gobiernos que, desconociendo la irresistible influencia de las ideas salvadoras en aquella Asamblea surgidas, bulliendo en los cerebros y latiendo en los corazones de los pueblos, pretenden sumirles en perenne esclavitud.

Hoy para todo pueblo redimido vienen a sus mientes los nombres inmortales de Mirabeau y Vergniaud, y agradecido no puede menos de rendirles pletio-homenaje de adoración.

Así pues, el pueblo francés, cuyo gran corazón jamás se desmaya ni desfallece ante las vicisitudes varias durante un siglo, encarnando en su espíritu, por no decir deificando consubstancialmente aquellas hermosas ideas y aquellos sublimes sentimientos de LIBERTAD, IGUALDAD Y FRATERNIDAD predichos, propagados, defendidos y proclamados por aquellos peloteros, por no decir revolucionarios del 89, presta hoy justo tributo a la inmortal Asamblea que después se convirtió en Convención y a sus inmortales héroes con su nunca vista y asombrosa Exposición Universal, mal que pese a ciertos Estados monárquicos que no han querido secundar los altos ideales de la Francia republicana.

La Exposición Universal que hoy se celebra en el cerebro del mundo, como ha dicho hermosamente el gran poeta francés de este siglo Victor Hugo, es una voz que clama, diciendo: Por su Asamblea de 1789, por su gran Revolución que ha proclamado los derechos del hombre, expone hoy en espectáculo y en consideración del orbe entero las conquistas de las ciencias, los progresos de la humanidad, cuyo fin es indefinido.

Como demócratas, terminamos saludando al pueblo francés, adorando a su gran Asamblea y a su inmortal Revolución.

## THE TRANSLATION

### THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

It has been a hundred years since an event stirred the heart of the French nation and moved the entire world. We salute, like good democrats, that great French Revolution and its immortal Assembly which changed the face of the world in the succeeding centuries.

Without it, without that Revolution, mankind would still be in fetid backwardness and dominated by the iron hand of ancient and tyrannical institutions; without it, we would not be enjoying today the important discoveries of science, especially of physics and chemistry, which have disproved the solemn proclamations of so-called truths regarded as revelations.

We marvel at how that Assembly, amidst great turmoil and concerted attacks from the nobility in unholy alliance with the corrupt clergy, was able

to shake down the throne and to decapitate the king who then wore the crown that had been regarded in awe for a hundred generations. We are happy to recall that solemn declaration of the great Mirabeau against the idea of privileges—that absurd notion that the nobility and the king should always be the lords, and the people their slaves. We are glad to remember that solemn session of May 5 when he asserted the sovereignty of the people who had been often ridiculed and persecuted.

Those memories constitute a living example to fervent lovers of freedom who are enslaved still by governments that, ignoring the irresistible influences of the redeeming ideas earnestly advocated by the Assembly, which permeate the minds and hearts of the people, try to hold the people in perpetual slavery.

Today all liberated peoples remember the immortal names of Mirabeau and Vergniaud and are so grateful to them that they wish to render them tribute and pay them reverent homage.

Thus, the French people, whose hearts never waver nor weaken under the many vicissitudes of time, uniting and glorifying in their very existence those beautiful ideas and those sublime sentiments of *Liberty, Equality and Fraternity* which were held, propagated, defended, and proclaimed by those "tennis players," that is, the revolutionists of 1789 [who made their oath at a tennis court on 20 June 1789], give loyal tribute to the immortal Assembly—later converted into a convention—and to their immortal heroes, by holding a Universal Exposition never equalled before and in spite of the opposition of some monarchist groups who were against the lofty ideas of the Republican France.

The Universal Exposition which is being celebrated in the brain of the world—as has been said beautifully by that great French poet of this century Victor Hugo—is a voice saying: by its Assembly of 1789, by its great Revolution which proclaimed the rights of man, it shows forth today the marvel before the eyes of the whole world the triumphs of the sciences, the achievements of mankind, whose limits is unknown.

As democrats, we close by saluting the French people, holding in great reverence their great Assembly and their immortal Revolution.