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A Case of Mistaken Identity in
Writing Revolutionary History**

William Henry Scott

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Texts and Documents

**“To the Brave Sons of the Philippines”:
A Case of Mistaken Identity in
Writing Revolutionary History**
WILLIAM HENRY SCOTT

In 1906, John Foreman published an English translation of a Tagalog manifesto as “To the brave sons of the Philippines,” in the third edition of his *The Philippine Islands*, which he said had been printed and circulated, undated but over the signature “Malabar,” in July 1897 during the Philippine Revolution. It was an appeal to expand the Katipunan to Ilocos and the northern provinces and to resort to guerrilla warfare, not to obtain independence but to force Spain to grant political and economic concessions to her Philippine colony. An abridged version appeared in Spanish in the 31 October 1897 issue of W. E. Retana’s Madrid fortnightly, *La Política de España en Filipinas*, as having been taken from a Japanese newspaper in Yokohama, with “Malabar” changed to “Emilio Aguinaldo.” This, in turn, was translated into English by John R. M. Taylor in his *The Philippine Insurrection against the United States* with the further addition of a place and date—“Biacnabato, September 6, 1897.” These translations have been conveniently reprinted by Pedro Achútegui and Miguel Bernad as Documents 123 and 127 in their 1972 *Aguinaldo and the Philippine Revolution of 1896*. And from this source they were quoted by Renato Constantino in chapter 11 of his 1975 *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*.

Each of these historians comments on the significance of the manifesto for understanding the Philippine Revolution. Foreman says it sets forth the Revolution’s basic goals, and Achútegui and Bernad point out that earlier manifestos issued in Cavite had been more narrowly addressed to the “Tagalog nation” instead of the

whole “sons of the Philippines.” And Constantino sees it as evidence of Aguinaldo’s bourgeoisie vacillation from his stated revolutionary goal of complete independence.

Unfortunately for all this scholarly speculation, the manifesto appears to have been written, not by Aguinaldo either in July or September, but by Isabelo de los Reyes in his father-in-law’s residence in Malabon on 30 May 1897. This was Isabelo’s own claim in 1899, and the claim can be validated by the fact that the manifesto’s list of assimilationist demands had already appeared at greater length in the “Memoria” he wrote in Bilibid Prison and presented to Primo de Rivera on April 26, a contemporary copy of which survives in the Jesuit Archives in San Cugat, Barcelona.

Isabelo do los Reyes was a small-time Ilocano businessman in Tondo and a professional journalist who wrote for a half dozen Manila papers, edited three and owned two, and the hundreds of articles he ground out almost daily for the decade before the Revolution make his style easy to recognize. The “Malabar” manifesto contains features characteristic of that style, such as the citation of financial minutiae and the Spanish press *mismo* to support arguments—e.g., “It must be remembered that the very Spanish newspapers admit that each soldier costs a dollar a day, and adding to this his passage money, clothing and equipment, the total amounts to a considerable sum.” Moreover, the basic purpose of the manifesto is not only spelled out in the “Memoria” but is perhaps unique to it—that is, the recommendation of “Cuban style” guerilla warfare to obtain, not independence, but political reforms.¹ Real hit-and-run guerilla tactics were not seriously considered by revolutionaries in the field until Major Juan Villamor’s 12 December 1898 recommendation to Director of War Antonio Luna, and armed struggle simply to ameliorate colonial conditions seems to have been an idea peculiar to Isabelo himself. The source of the manifesto, in short, appears to be the following two chap-

1. *Guerrilla* in Spanish means “little war” (those who fight them are *guerrilleros*) and was originally applied to local resistance to Arab occupation; Filipinos used the term during the Fil-American War to mean a unit of the armed forces—e.g., Major Aniceto Angeles’ “Guerrilla No. 1 of Anti-Invador Battalion No. 1” of the Tinio Brigade. But, the manifesto notwithstanding, Aguinaldo did not use the term for his own forces withdrawing from Cavite in 1897; rather, he used it for those being left behind enemy lines—viz., “ang mga guerrilyang aming iwan dito sa mando ng magkapatid na Heneral Emilio y Mariano [should be ‘Emiliano] Riego de Dios.”

ters (III and IV) in Isabelo de los Reyes' 24 April 1897 'Memoria on the Philippine Revolution, by one accused of being an insurgent chief':

III. THE PRESENT STATE OF THE INSURRECTION

General Polavieja may have returned to Spain thinking that the insurrection had been put down with his taking merely half, no more than half, of the insurgent towns of Cavite. This is a great error, for this is still only the *first half of the first phase* of the war, while his error would have been sadder still and even provocative if, instead of making just concessions to the country which found itself obliged to take up arms to reclaim its political rights, he had restored the old laws of the Indies by revoking even the skimpy legal and administrative advances which the magnanimity of the Nation had conceded to this unfortunate people.

Only half.—I say "only half" because the Spanish troops are under siege and only in control of places they physically occupy.

General Lachambre has taken Silang, Pérez Dasmariñas, Imus, Cavite Viejo, Bacoor, San Francisco and Santa Cruz de Malabon, Rosario and the barrios of Novaleta and Binakayan, a total of eight towns and two barrios. On the other hand, Naik, Indang, Maragondón, Bailén, Amadeo, Méndez Nuñez, Alfonso, Ternate and Magallanes remain free, a total of nine towns—and ten with Silang if it is true that the insurgents have reoccupied it, besides a number of towns of Batangas, Laguna, Morong, Bulakan and Manila which remain in the power of the insurgents.

a.) *First phase: defensive.*—When the Spaniards managed to take these towns, the first phase of the war was over. The insurgents know very well that with only bolos they cannot resist the Spaniards' attacks because they possess good cannons, many Mausers and inexhaustible munitions; but they also know that these have been offset by fighting almost in safety behind trenches and hidden up to their eyes in holes in the ground roofed over with a covering that protects them from grenades. Thus they wait for their enemies, on whom they inflict heavy losses with impunity because they present themselves exposed

out in the open. When the insurgents find themselves caught by a surprise attack at an unexpected point and about to be overrun by a Spanish charge, they quietly abandon their positions, but will have caused many casualties to the column which attacked them frontally. With this defensive tactic, the insurgents intend to decimate Spanish troops before they enter the second phase of the war.

b.) *Second phase: Offensive.*—Once all the towns which the insurgents now hold are taken, they will take the offensive, spreading out in separate columns to all the provinces of Luzon which have remained peaceful until now, to raise up all the towns which have no Spanish garrisons and to swell their ranks.

General Polavieja himself knew that in this second phase of the campaign, the insurgents will adopt the Cuban system of guerrilla warfare, their object being to force Spain to maintain a large army in this country with garrisons in all the towns and barrios of the archipelago, to defeat her by economic exhaustion. And even if the insurrection is defeated this time, it will quickly break out again in more formidable proportions and perhaps with the necessary sectors of the population which it now lacks, because it is impossible that the richer elements, the bourgeoisie and *ilustrados*, who were falsely implicated and imprisoned in the present revolt, will quickly forget their grievancés unless they are given justice by expelling their tormentors and granting them their political rights as true Spanish citizens.

We will state the problem in simple terms. Is it to Spain's advantage, especially in the present circumstances when she is maintaining another war in Cuba, to keep an army of 100,000 men here and risk the innumerable unforeseen incidents of a war which is surprising everybody, including the insurgents themselves, with results which are favorable to them?

Is it more to Spain's advantage to make this very costly sacrifice for the sake of a few religious orders which, in such critical times, have driven her into a sad and unnecessary war in this distant region, while in Spain they work to incite civil war, or to make just concessions to the Philippines, which aspires to nothing more than being treated like a Spanish province and not a disinherited colony?

IV. THE PROGRAM OF THE REVOLUTION

So let us look at the aspirations of the Philippines and see if they are really acceptable:

1. Expulsion of the Dominican, Augustinian, Recollect and Franciscan friars who have been such insatiable persecutors of the country; confiscation of their goods as indemnification for the war, and division of their parishes equally among Peninsular and Insular secular clergy by competitive exams.
2. The same political, administrative and economic concessions as have been made to the Antilles [i.e., Cuba] and therefore the promulgation of the Constitution in these islands, with freedom of press and association, unification of the laws and other modern changes; and economic and administrative autonomy. For neither in our relative weakness nor in anything else do we see any reason for denying these to us except the hidden hand of the friar, who denies us everything from fire to water.
3. Combining the Insular army and marines with Peninsulars, and equal division of civil employment between Peninsulars and Insulars.
4. The devolution of the lands usurped by the friars to their owners, and confiscation of those which are legitimately theirs; after which they will be sold in small parcels under the same conditions as the sale of Royal lands.
5. Effective suppression of usurpations, immoralities and illegal exactions; prohibition of insults to the Filipino people from the pulpit and in the press; and the abolition of Government deportations and other abusive practices.
6. Economy in the salaries of personnel in order to promote railroads and other public works, and a decrease in taxes. The territorial tax which it was said General Polavieja was planning to impose aggravated the insurrection, just like the reforms proposed by the friars.

With these concessions and a general amnesty extended to those sentenced for political crimes, without their implication in the present revolution constituting a legal impediment, the Filipinos will lay down their arms.

That the full pardon granted the insurgents be extended also

to their chiefs is reasonable because this will serve much better than cannons and rifles to reduce their ranks; but this is still not enough for the insurgents to accept disarmament. It will be necessary for Spain to give them justice, granting them what is logical and reasonable, because after having lost their loved ones and shed so much blood, with their houses destroyed and fields dessicated, it is not possible that the farmers will lay down their arms even if their chiefs want them to, for in this case their chiefs would run the risk of being sacrificed by the populace. Like the Mohametans of Mindanao and Jolo, the insurgents are just as fanatical and intransigent as their enemies, the friars: they have blind faith in the justice of the cause they are defending, and I do not think they will accept any kind of compromise or modification in their program, which we have just presented above and which will in fact be the only stable basis for Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines.²

Isabelo was released from Bilibid on May 17 and, his wife having died while he was incarcerated, he took his five children and moved in with his father-in-law in Malabon. There he edited the second part of the "Memoria," attended a Katipunan wedding, and wrote the subversive "Malabar" manifesto—whose "signature" is probably a misreading of "Malabon." The demands as expressed in the Tagalog manifesto are naturally less prolix than in the Spanish "Memoria," better edited, and relieved of the more odious references to friars. He delivered the expanded "Memoria" to Primo de Rivera on May 31 and was rearrested the following day and deported by executive order without charges on June 10. To whom he gave copies of the manifesto we have no way of knowing, but at least at the time it was being circulated in July, he was in leg-irons on board the *SS Alicante* bound for Barcelona. Then, on July 30, the manifesto was published in an English translation in the Hong Kong *China Mail* with the significant addition of Aguinaldo's name, no doubt by some member of the Filipino community there like Faustino Lichauco or Mariano Ponce, friends who shared Isabelo's anti-friar but pro-Spanish sentiments. On August 10, the English translation was reprinted in the Tokyo

2. Rizal Library, Ateneo de Manila University, microfilm item E-II-e, "St. Louis Collection" reel 46, pages 57-67.

Japan Times, and in October a Spanish translation from the English appeared in a number of Madrid papers—*El Republicano* on the fourteenth, for instance.³ When Retana reprinted this translation in his virulently anti-Filipino paper on the thirty-first, he suppressed the list of desired reforms, whether for lack of space or because they were too reasonable to excite Spanish readers. In none of these publications does the dateline appear which Captain Taylor added to his translation. Finally, it may be noted that Isabelo himself was delighted with the mistake in identity: when he published the “Memoria” in 1899 as *La sensacional Memoria de Isabelo de los Reyes sobre la Revolución filipina de 1896-97*, he appended the manifesto under the heading, “Aguinaldo makes my program his.”

To complete the record, the English translation from the *Japan Times* of 10 August 1897 is presented here:

THE REBELLION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Proclamation by Aguinaldo

The following is a translation by the *China Mail* from a Tagalog proclamation printed and extensively circulated through the Philippine Islands, the copies of which the Spanish Authorities are trying by every means in their power to confiscate:—

TO THE VALIANT SONS OF THE PHILIPPINES

The towns in the Province of Cavite have been taken by the Spaniards owing to our having abandoned them for convenient reasons. We must change our tactics according to circumstances. We have found it bad policy to be fortified in one fixed place awaiting the attack from the enemy. It is necessary for us to take the offensive when opportunity offers, adopting the Cuban method of ambush and guerrilla warfare. Thus we can defy

3. *El Republicano* cites its English-language source as *El Anunciador Diario de Japon* (*The Daily Advertiser of Japan*), but since no such periodical is listed in the Japanese National Diet Library, this is presumably an error for *The Japan Advertiser* of Yokohama. The likely translator into Spanish would therefore be Filipino patriot Jose A. Ramos Ishikawa, then resident in Yokohama.

Spain for an indefinite period, exhausting her resources, and obliging her to surrender from debility; because it must be taken into consideration the very Spanish newspapers admit that each soldier requires one dollar per day for his sustenance and expenses, to which must be added his passage money, clothing arms, and ammunition, etc., all of which amounts to an enormous sum.

When one considers that Spanish credit with foreign powers is *nil*, that her young men, to avoid conscription, are emigrating to France and other countries in great numbers, Spain will have no other course left but to succumb in the end. You already know that Polavieja resigned because the Government were importent to send him the extra 20,000 men he required.

The Cubans, with their guerrilla system, avoiding fights unfavorable for themselves, have succeeded in tiring out the Spaniards, who are dying from the effects of the climate in large numbers. Following this system it would be very convenient to extend the action of the Katipunan to the Provinces of Ilocos, Pangasinan, Cagayan and others, because our brothers in these places, barbarously tyrannized by the Spaniards, are ready to defend our common cause.

The Provinces of Zambales, Tarlac, Tayabas, etc., are already under the government of the Katipunan, and in order that success may be complete it is necessary for the revolutionary movement to become general, and thus effect what we all so ardently desire, i.e.

1. Expulsion of the Friars and confiscation and return of their lands to the townships from which they have been filched; dividing the parishes ruled by them, and also the episcopal sees equally between Insular and Peninsular secular priests.
2. Spain must concede to us what she has conceded to Cuba, representatives to defend our interests in the Spanish Parliament, freedom of the press, toleration of all religious sects, application of general law, and administrative and economic autonomy.
3. Equality in treatment and pay between Peninsular and Insular civil servants.
4. Devolution of all lands usurped by the Friars to the townships or primitive owners where possible, or in default

- thereof the state to sell them by public auction in small lots, to be within the reach of everyone, and payable within 4 years, the same as obtains with grants of royal lands.
5. Suppression of the power to banish citizens by government authorities, as well as all unjust measures against Filipinos; and legal equality for all persons whether Peninsular or Insular, both under the Civil and Penal Codes.

It is absolutely necessary to prolong the war and give the greatest sign of virility possible, in order that Spain may be forced to grant what we seek, otherwise she will consider us a decrepit race, and in place of amplifying our rights will still further curtail them.

EMILIO AGUINALDO