

PROLOGUE

Rizal and His Times

To appreciate and understand the life of Dr. Jose Rizal, it is necessary to know the historical background of the world and of the Philippines during his times. The 19th century when he lived was a century of ferment caused by the blowing winds of history. In Asia, Europe, and the Americas, events surged inexorably like sea tides, significantly affecting the lives and fortunes of mankind.

The World of Rizal's Times

On February 19, 1861, four months before Rizal's birth in Calamba, the liberal Czar Alexander II (1855-1881), to appease the rising discontent of the Russian masses, issued a proclamation emancipating 22,500,000 serfs. When Rizal was born on June 19, 1861, the American Civil War (1861-65) was raging furiously in the United States over the issue of Negro slavery. This titanic conflict, which erupted on April 12, 1861, compelled President Lincoln to issue his famous Emancipation Proclamation on September 22, 1863 freeing the Negro slaves.

On June 1, 1861, just eighteen days before Rizal's birth, Benito Juarez, a full-blooded Zapotec Indian, was elected President of Mexico.¹ A year after his election (in April 1862) Emperor Napoleon III of the Second French Empire, in his imperialistic desire to secure a colonial stake in Latin America, sent French troops which invaded and conquered Mexico. President Juarez, owing to the raging American Civil War, could not obtain military aid from his friend, President Lincoln, but he continued to resist the French invaders with his valiant Indian and Mexican freedom fighters. To consolidate his occupation of Mexico, Napoleon III, installed Archduke Maximilian of Austria as puppet emperor of Mexico at Mexico city on June 12, 1864. Finally, after the end of the American Civil War, Juarez, with U.S. support, defeated Maximilian's French forces in the Battle

June 19, 1861

of Queretaro (May 15, 1867) and executed Emperor Maximilian on June 19, 1867 (Rizal's sixth birthday anniversary). Thus fizzled out Emperor Napoleon III's ambition to colonize Latin America.

In Rizal's times two European nations (Italians and Germans) succeeded in unifying their own countries. The Italians under the leadership of Count Cavour and of Garibaldi and his Army of "Red Shirts" drove out the Austrians and French armies from Italy and proclaimed the Kingdom of Italy under King Victor Emmanuel, with Rome as capital city. The Prussians led by Otto von Bismarck, the "Iron Chancellor", defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War and established the German Empire on January 18, 1871, with King Wilhelm of Prussia as first Kaiser of the German Empire. With his defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, Emperor Napoleon III's Second French Empire collapsed, and over its ruins the Third French Republic arose, with Adolph Thiers as first President.

The times of Rizal saw the flowering of Western imperialism. England emerged as the world's leading imperialist power. On account of her invincible navy and magnificent army, she was able to conquer many countries throughout the world and to establish a global colonial empire. Thus the British people during the glorious reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) proudly asserted: "Britannia rules the waves." By winning the First Opium War (1840-1842) against the tottering Chinese Empire under the Manchu dynasty, she acquired the island of Hong Kong (Fragrant Harbor). In the Second Opium War (1856-1860),² she won again and forced the helpless Manchu dynasty to cede the Kowloon Peninsula opposite Hong Kong. In 1859, after suppressing the Indian Rebellion and dismantling the Mogul Empire, she imposed her raj (rule) over the subcontinent of India (now consisting of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). By winning the Three Anglo-Burmese Wars (1824-26, 1852, and 1885), she conquered Burma. Other lands in Asia which became British colonies were Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Maldives, Aden, Malaya, Singapore, and Egypt. Australia and New Zealand in the South Pacific also became British colonies.

Other imperialists, following Britain's example, grabbed the weak countries in Southeast Asia and colonized them. In 1858-1863, France, with the help of Filipino troops under Spanish

French Indochina (Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos)

officers,³ conquered Vietnam; annexed Cambodia (1863) and Laos (1893); and merged all these countries into a federated colony under the name of French Indochina. The Dutch, after driving away the Portuguese and Spaniards from the East Indies in the 17th century, colonized this vast and rich archipelago and named it the Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia).

Czarist Russia, unable to expand westward to Europe, turned eastward to Asia, conquering Siberia and later occupied Kamchatka, Kuriles, and Alaska (which she sold in 1867 to the U.S. for \$7,200,000). From 1865 to 1884, she conquered the Muslim Khanates of Bokhara, Khiva, and Kokand in Central Asia. Expanding towards China, Czarist Russia joined England, France, and Germany in the despoliation of the crumbling Chinese Empire, acquiring Manchuria as a "sphere of influence," thus enabling her to build the 5,800-mile Trans-Siberian Railway, reputed to be "the world's longest railroad" linking Vladivostok and Moscow.

Trans-Siberian Railway

On July 8, 1853, an American squadron under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry re-opened Japan to the world. After this event, which ended Japan's 214-year isolation (1639-1853), Emperor Meiji (Mutsuhito) modernized the country by freely accepting Western influences, including imperialism. No sooner had Japan strengthened her navy and army along Western lines, when she, joining the Western imperialist powers, began her imperialist career by fighting weak China in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and grabbed Formosa (Taiwan) and Pescadores. And later in 1910 she annexed Korea.

Germany, it should be recalled became a sovereign state in January 1871, and was late in the scramble for colonies in Asia and Africa. In search for colonial stakes, she turned to the island archipelagoes of the mid-Pacific world. On August 25, 1885, a German warship, the Ities, entered the harbor of Yap (an island in the Carolines), landing the German marines who seized the island, hoisted the German flag and proclaimed the Carolines and Palaus archipelagoes as colonies of Germany. Strangely, the Spanish governor of the Carolines (Don Enrique Capriles) was present in the island, with two Spanish ships moored at its harbor, but due to cowardice or other reasons, he did not offer resistance to the German aggression.

Otto von Bismarck - "Iron Chancellor" ^{ix}

The German seizure of Yap island enraged Spain, who claimed sovereignty over the Carolines and Palaus by right of discovery. It should be noted that the island of Yap was discovered by the Manila galleon pilot, Francisco Lezcano, who named it "Carolina" in honor of King Charles II (1665-1700) of Spain, which name was applied to the other islands.⁴ Spanish-German relations grew critical. In Madrid, the Spanish populace rose in violent riots, demanding war against Germany. To avert actual clash of arms, Spain and Germany submitted the Carolina Question to Pope Leo XIII for arbitration.

The Holy Father, after careful study of the pertinent documents submitted by both parties, issued his decision on October 22, 1885 favoring Spain — recognizing Spain's sovereignty over the Carolines and Palaus, but granting two concessions to Germany — (1) the right to trade in the disputed archipelagoes and (2) the right to establish a coaling station in Yap for the German navy. Both Spain and Germany accepted the Papal decision, so that the Hispano-German War was aborted. It is interesting to recall that during the critical days of the Hispano-German imbroglio over the Carolines, Rizal was in Barcelona visiting his friend Maximo Viola. At the same time he wrote an article on the Carolina Question which was published in *La Publicidad*,⁵ a newspaper owned by Don Miguel Morayta.

While the imperialist powers were enjoying the fruits of their colonial ventures and achieving global prestige, Spain, once upon a time the "mistress of the world," was stagnating as a world power. Gone with the winds of time was the dalliance of the imperial glory of her vanished *Siglo de Oro* (Golden Age). She lost her rich colonies in Latin America — Paraguay (1811), Argentina (1816), Chile (1817), Colombia and Ecuador (1819), the Central American countries (Costa Rica, Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua) in 1821, Venezuela (1822), Peru (1824), and Bolivia and Uruguay (1825). These former Spanish colonies had risen in arms against Spanish tyranny and achieved their independence. Evidently, Spain never learned a lesson from the loss of these colonies, for she continued a despotic rule in her remaining overseas colonies, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines.

The Philippines of Rizal's Times

During the times of Rizal, the sinister shadows of Spain's decadence darkened Philippine skies. The Filipino people agonized beneath the yoke of Spanish misrule, for they were unfortunate victims of the evils of an unjust, bigoted, and deteriorating colonial power. Among these evils were as follows: (1) Instability of colonial administration, (2) corrupt officialdom, (3) no Philippine representation in the Spanish Cortes, (4) human rights denied to Filipinos, (5) no equality before the law, (6) maladministration of justice, (7) racial discrimination, (8) fraileocracy, (9) forced labor, (10) haciendas owned by the friars, and (11) the Guardia Civil.

Instability of Colonial Administration. The instability of Spanish politics since the turbulent reign of King Ferdinand VII (1808-1833) marked the beginning of political chaos in Spain. The Spanish government underwent frequent changes owing to bitter struggles between the forces of despotism and liberalism and the explosions of the Carlist Wars. From 1834 to 1862, Spain had adopted four constitutions, elected 28 parliaments, and installed no less than 529 ministers with portfolios; followed in subsequent years by party strifes, revolutions, and other political upheavals.⁶

This political instability in Spain adversely affected Philippine affairs because it brought about frequent periodic shifts in colonial policies and a periodic rigodon of colonial officials. For instance, from 1835 to 1897, the Philippines was ruled by 50 governors general, each serving an average term of only one year and three months.⁷ At one time — from December 1853 to November 1854 — a period of less than a year, there were four governors-general.

To illustrate the confusing instability of Spanish politics and its inimical effect, an anecdote was told as follows: In the year 1850 a Spanish jurist, who was appointed oidor (magistrate) of the Royal Audiencia of Manila, left Madrid with his whole family and took the longer route via Cape of Good Hope, arriving in Manila after a leisurely trip of about six months. Much to his surprise and discomfiture, he found out that another jurist was already occupying his position. During the six months when he was leisurely cruising at sea, the ministry which appointed him

fell in Madrid, and the succeeding ministry named his successor. And this new jurist traveled faster, taking the shorter route via the Isthmus of Suez and reached Manila earlier.

The frequent change of colonial officials hampered the political and economic development of the Philippines. Hardly had one governor-general begun his administration when he was soon replaced by his successor. Naturally, no chief executive, no matter how able and energetic he was, could accomplish much for the colony.

Corrupt Colonial Officials. With few exceptions, the colonial officials (governors-general, judges, provincial executives, etc.) sent by Spain to the Philippines in the 19th century were a far cry from their able and dedicated predecessors of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries. They were either highly corrupt, incompetent, cruel, or venal. Apparently, they symbolized the decadent Spain of the 19th century — not Spain of the *Siglo de Oro* which produced Miguel Cervantes, Lope de Vega, Calderon de la Barca, El Greco (Domenico Theotocopuli), Velasquez, St. Theresa de Avila, and other glories of the Hispanic nation.

General Rafael de Izquierdo (1871-73), a boastful and ruthless governor general, aroused the anger of the Filipinos by executing the innocent Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora, the "Martyrs of 1872". His successor, Admiral Jose Malcampo (1874-77), was a good Moro fighter, but was an inept and weak administrator. General Fernando Primo de Rivera, governor general for two terms (1880-83 and 1897-98), enriched himself by accepting bribes from gambling casinos in Manila which he scandalously permitted to operate. General Valeriano Weyler (1888-91), a cruel and corrupt governor general of Hispanic-German ancestry, arrived in Manila a poor man and returned to Spain a millionaire. He received huge bribes and gifts of diamonds for his wife from wealthy Chinese who evaded the anti-Chinese law. The Filipinos scornfully called him "tyrant" because of his brutal persecution of the Calamba tenants, particularly the family of Dr. Rizal. The Cubans contemptuously cursed him as "The Butcher" because of his ruthless reconcentration policy during his brief governorship in Cuba in 1896, causing the death of thousands of Cubans. General Camilo de Polavieja (1896-97), an able militarist but heartless governor

general, was widely detested by the Filipino people for executing Dr. Rizal.

Other Spanish colonial officials were of the same evil breed of men as the corrupt and degenerate governors-general mentioned above. After the loss of Mexico, Guatemala, Chile, Argentina, and other colonies in Latin America, numerous job-seekers and penniless Spanish sycophants came to the Philippines, where they became judges, provincial executives, army officers, and *empleados* (government employees). They were either relatives or proteges of civil officials and friars. Mostly ignorant and profligate, they conducted themselves with arrogance and superciliousness because of their alien white skin and tall noses. They became rich by illegal means or by marrying the heiresses of rich Filipino families.

As early as in 1810, Tomas de Comyn, Spanish writer and government official, bewailed the obnoxious fact that ignorant barbers and lackeys were appointed provincial governors, and rough sailors and soldiers were named district magistrates and garrison commanders.⁸

Philippine Representation in Spanish Cortes. To win the support of her overseas colonies during the Napoleonic invasion, Spain granted them representation in the Cortes (Spanish parliament). Accordingly, the Philippines experienced her first period of representation in the Cortes from 1810 to 1813. History demonstrates that the first Philippine delegate, Ventura de los Reyes, took active part in the framing of the Constitution of 1812, Spain's first democratic constitution, and was one of its 184 signers. This constitution was extended to the Philippines. Another achievement of Delegate De los Reyes was the abolition of the galleon trade.

The first period of Philippine representation in the Spanish Cortes (1810-1813) was thus fruitful with beneficent results for the welfare of the colony. However, the second period of representation (1820-23) and the third period (1834-37) were less fruitful because the Philippine delegates were not as energetic and devoted in parliamentary work as De los Reyes.

Unfortunately, the representation of the overseas colonies (including the Philippines) in the Spanish Cortes was abolished in 1837. Since then Philippine conditions worsened because there was

no means by which the Filipino people could expose the anomalies perpetrated by the colonial officials. Many Filipino patriots valiantly pleaded for the restoration of Philippine representation in the Cortes. One of them, the silver-tongued Graciano Lopez Jaena, implored in sonorous Castilian on October 12, 1883, during the 391st anniversary of the discovery of America by Columbus in Madrid: "We want representation in the legislative chamber so that our aspirations may be known to the mother country and its government."⁹ Lamentably Spain ignored the fervent plea of Lopez Jaena and his compatriots. Their grievance was embittered by the fact that Cuba and Puerto Rico were granted representation in the Cortes by the Spanish Constitution of 1876. Until the end of Spanish rule in 1898, Philippine representation in the Cortes was never restored.

No wonder, Jose Rizal, M.H. del Pilar, Graciano Lopez Jaena, and other youthful patriots launched the Propaganda Movement, which paved the way for the Philippine Revolution of 1896.

Human Rights Denied to Filipinos. Since the adoption of the Spanish Constitution of 1812 and other constitutions in succeeding years, the people of Spain enjoyed freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and other human rights (except freedom of religion). The Spaniards ardently guarded these rights so that no Spanish monarch dared abolish them.

Strangely enough, the Spanish authorities who cherished these human rights or constitutional liberties in Spain denied them to the Filipinos in Asia. Such inconsistency was lamented by Sinibaldo de Mas, Spanish economist and diplomat, who wrote in 1843: "Why do we fall into an anomaly, such as combining our claim for liberty for ourselves, and our wish to impose our law on remote peoples? Why do we deny to others the benefit which we desire for our fatherland?"¹⁰

No Equality Before the Law. The Spanish missionaries, who introduced Christianity into the Philippines as early as in the 16th century, taught that all men, irrespective of color and race, are children of God and as such they are brothers, equal before God. Fascinated by this noble concept of human relations and convinced by the truths of the Christian faith, most Filipinos (except those in

the hinterlands of Luzon and the Visayas and in Mindanao and Sulu) became Christians.

In practice, however, the Spanish colonial authorities, who were Christians, did not implement Christ's precept of the brotherhood of all men under the fatherhood of God. Especially during the last decades of Hispanic rule, they arrogantly regarded the brown-skinned Filipinos as inferior beings, not their Christian brothers to be protected but rather as their majesty's subjects to be exploited. To their imperialist way of thinking, brown Filipinos and white Spaniards may be equal before God, but not before the law and certainly not in practice.

It is true that the *Leyes de Indias* (Laws of the Indies) were promulgated by the Christian monarchs of Spain to protect the rights of the natives in Spain's overseas colonies and to promote their welfare. However, these good colonial laws, infused as they were with Christian charity and justice, were rarely enforced by the officials in the distant colonies, particularly the Philippines. Consequently, the Filipinos were abused, brutalized, persecuted, and slandered by their Spanish masters. They could not appeal to the law for justice because the law, being dispensed by Spaniards, was only for the white Spaniards.

The Spanish Penal Code, which was enforced in the Philippines, particularly imposed heavier penalties on native Filipinos or mestizos and lighter penalties on white-complexioned Spaniards. This legal inequality was naturally resented by the Filipinos. As Professor Ferdinand Blumentritt wrote to Dr. Rizal in 1887: "The provision of the Penal Code that a heavier penalty will be imposed on the Indio or mestizo irritates me exceedingly, because it signifies that every person not born white is in fact a latent criminal. This is a very great injustice that seems enormous and unjust for being embodied in law."¹¹

Maladministration of Justice. The courts of justice in the Philippines during Rizal's time were notoriously corrupt. Verily, they were courts of "injustice", as far as the brown Filipinos were concerned. The Spanish judges, fiscals (prosecuting attorneys), and other court officials were inept, venal, and oftentimes ignorant of law.

Justice was costly, partial, and slow. Poor Filipinos had no access to the courts because they could not afford the heavy

expenses of litigation. Wealth, social prestige, and color of skin were preponderant factors in winning a case in court. Irrespective of the weight of evidence, a rich man or a Spaniard, whose skin was white, easily achieved victory in any litigation.

To the Filipino masses, a litigation in court was a calamity. The expenses incurred even in a simple lawsuit often exceeded the value of the property at issue, so that in many instances the litigants found themselves impoverished at the end of the long tussle. Criminal cases dragged on for many years during which period either the delinquents took to flight, or the documents were lost.

The judicial procedure was so slow and clumsy that it was easy to have justice delayed. And justice delayed, as a popular maxim states, "is justice denied". Thus related John Foreman, a British eyewitness of the last years of Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines:¹²

It was hard to get the judgment executed as it was to win the case. Even when the question at issue was supposed to be settled, a defect in the sentence could always be concocted to reopen the whole affair. If the case had been tried and judgment given under the Civil Code, a way was found to convert it into a Criminal Code, a flaw could be discovered under the Laws of the Indies, or the Siete Partidas, or the Roman Law, or the Novisima Recopilacion, or the Antiguos Fueros, Decrees, Royal Orders, Ordenanzas del Buen Gobierno, and so forth, by which the case could be reopened.

A specific instance of Spanish maladministration of justice was the infamous case of Juan de la Cruz in 1886-1898. On the night of June 7, 1886, two men were brutally killed in their sleep at the waterfront of Cavite. The next day a coxswain of a motor launch named Juan de la Cruz was arrested on mere suspicion of having perpetrated the murder. Without preliminary investigation and proper trial, he was jailed in Cavite, where he languished for twelve years. When the Americans landed in Cavite after the Battle of Manila Bay (May 1, 1898), they found him in jail still awaiting trial.¹³

Dr. Rizal and his family were victims of Spanish injustice. Twice, first in 1871 and second in 1891, Doña Teodora (Rizal's mother) was unjustly arrested and jailed on flimsy grounds. Rizal himself was deported in July, 1892 to Dapitan without benefit of a

trial. His brother Paciano and several brothers-in-law were exiled to various parts of the archipelago without due process of law. Like Fathers Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos, and Jacinto Zamora, Rizal was executed — a noble victim of Spanish miscarriage of justice.

Equality before the law

Racial Discrimination. Spain introduced Christianity into the Philippines with its beautiful egalitarian concept of the brotherhood of all men under God the Father. The Spanish authorities, civil as well as ecclesiastical, zealously propagated the Christian faith, but seldom practised its sublime tenets. They regarded the converted Filipinos not as brother Christians, but as inferior beings who were infinitely undeserving of the rights and privileges that the white Spaniards enjoyed.

With this unchristian attitude, many Spaniards and their mestizo satellites derisively called the brown-skinned and flat-nosed Filipinos "Indios" (Indians). In retaliation, the Filipinos jealously dubbed their pale-complexioned detractors with the disparaging term "bangus" (milkfish). During Rizal's time a white skin, a high nose, and Castilian lineage were a badge of vaunted superiority. Hence, a Spaniard or a mestizo, no matter how stupid or mongrel-born he was, always enjoyed political and social prestige in the community.

Racial prejudice was prevalent everywhere — in government offices, in the courts of justice, in the armed forces, in the social circles, and even in the educational institutions and in the ecclesiastical hierarchy. One of the shining stars of the Filipino clergy, Father Jose Burgos (1837-1872) bewailed the Spanish misconception that a man's merit depended on the pigment of his skin, the height of his nose, the color of his hair, and the shape of his skull; and complained of the lack of opportunities for educated young Filipinos to rise in the service of God and country. "Why for instance," he lamented, "shall a young man strive to rise in the profession of law or of theology, when he can vision no future for himself save that of obscurity and jaunty unconcern? What Filipino will aspire to the seats of the wise and will devote sleepless nights to such an ideal, when he clearly sees that his noblest feelings are crushed down in the unwelcome atmosphere of contumely and oblivion, and when he knows that among the privileged few only are dispensed the sinecures of honor and profit?"¹⁴

Gobernadorcillo - highest rank given to Filipinos

frailor - curate "Parish Priest"

Frailocracy. Owing to the Spanish political philosophy of union of Church and State, there arose a unique form of government in Hispanic Philippines called "frailocracy" (*frailocracia*), so named because it was "a government by friars". History discloses that since the days of the Spanish conquest, the friars (Augustinians, Dominicans, and Franciscans) controlled the religious and educational life of the Philippines, and later in the 19th century they came to acquire tremendous political power, influence, and riches.

The friars practically ruled the Philippines through a facade of civil government. The colonial authorities, from the governor general down to the *alcaldes mayores*, were under the control of the friars. Almost every town in the archipelago, except in unpacified Islamic Mindanao and Sulu and in the pagan hinterlands, was ruled by a friar curate. Aside from his priestly duties, the friar was the supervisor of local elections, the inspector of schools and taxes, the arbiter of morals, the censor of books and comedias (stage plays), the superintendent of public works, and the guardian of peace and order. So great was his political influence that his recommendations were heeded by the governor-general and the provincial officials. He could send a patriotic Filipino to jail or denounce him as a *filibustero* (traitor) to be exiled to a distant place or to be executed as an enemy of God and Spain.

Rizal, M.H. del Pilar, G. Lopez Jaena, and other Filipino reformists assailed frailocracy, blaming it for the prevailing policy of obscurantism, fanaticism, and oppression in the country. Rizal, for instance, denounced the friars as the enemies of liberal reforms and modern progress in the Philippines.

Like the Roman god Janus, frailocracy had two faces. Its bad face was darkly portrayed by Rizal and his contemporaries by way of retaliation against certain evil-hearted friars who persecuted them. For the sake of historical truth, the other face of frailocracy, its good face, should be known. In the felicitous opinion of Dr. Jose P. Laurel, "it would be a gross ingratitude on the part of the Filipinos to be conscious only of the abuses of the friars, and to close their eyes to the beneficent influences of the ecclesiastical element on the life of the Filipinos" ¹⁵

Credit must certainly be given to the Spanish friars for having introduced Christianity and European civilization into the Philippines. To them, the Filipinos owe a lasting debt of gratitude. Without their magnificent services the Filipino people would not have emerged from their past as a unique Christian nation, the only nation in Asia with an Oriental, Latin and Hispanic-American cultural heritage.

Of course, it is regrettable that not all Spanish friars who came to the Philippines were good men and worthy ministers of God. Among the bad friars who were recreant to their sublime calling and to the finest traditions of Iberian *pundonor* were Fray Miguel Lucio Bustamante, Fray Jose Rodriguez, Fray Antonio Piernavieja, and other renegade friars who were portrayed by Rizal in his novels as Padre Damaso and Padre Salvi and hilariously caricatured by Jaena as *Fray Botod*. These bad friars besmirched the noble escutcheon of Spain, tarnished the reputation of hundreds of their good brethren (including Fray Andres de Urdaneta, Fray Martin Rada, Fray Juan de Plasencia, Bishop Domingo de Salazar, Fray Francisco Blancas de San Jose, and Fray Miguel de Benavides), and aroused the bitter hatred of the Filipinos towards the Spanish religious orders.

Polo y servicio

Forced Labor. Known as the *polo*, it was the compulsory labor imposed by the Spanish colonial authorities on adult Filipino males in the construction of churches, schools, hospitals; building and repair of roads and bridges; the building of ships in the shipyards; and other public works.

Originally, Filipino males from 16 to 60 years old were obliged to render forced labor for 40 days a year. Later, the Royal Decree of July 12, 1883, implemented by the New Regulations promulgated by the Council of State of February 3, 1885, increased the minimum age of the *polistas* (those who performed the forced labor) from 16 to 18 and reduced the days of labor from 40 to 15. The same royal decree provided that not only native Filipinos, but also all male Spanish residents from 18 years old to 60 must render forced labor, but this particular provision was never implemented in the Philippines for obvious reasons. So actually the brown Filipinos did the dirty job of building or repairing the public works. The well-to-do among them were able to escape this manual labor by paying

the *falla*, which was a sum of money paid to the government to be exempted from the polo.

The Filipinos came to hate the forced labor because of the abuses connected with it. First of all, the white Spanish residents, contrary to law, were not recruited by the colonial authorities to perform the obligatory labor. Second, the Filipino *polistas*, according to law, were to receive a daily stipend of two pesetas (50 centavos) but actually received only a part of this amount and worse, they got nothing. And, thirdly, the annual forced labor caused so much inconvenience and suffering to the common people because it disturbed their work in farms and shops and also because they were sometimes compelled to work in construction projects far from their homes and towns.

A true incident of the hardship suffered by the Filipinos from forced labor was related by Rizal, as follows:¹⁶

In the town of Los Baños a hospital was built by laborers snatched from all the towns of the province. Each laborer forced by the authorities was paid eight cuartos (five centavos) daily, the ordinary daily wage being two pesetas or four peales fuertes. In addition, sales and charity bazaars were held to defray the cost of the buildings. The architect was a Franciscan brother. The hospital was erected, a palace of the captain general was constructed, agriculture and the towns suffered for their construction. Why are the people who pay their taxes compelled to work gratis? Why do they pay taxes if they are not going to be allowed to live with their families? Do they pay taxes so that they will be enslaved? Will the money of the taxpayer be used to hire petty tyrants and not to attend to the demands of society? What? Is the Spanish flag perchance the flag of the slave trade?

Haciendas Owned by the Friars. During Rizal's times the Spanish friars belonging to different religious orders were the richest landlords, for they owned the best haciendas (agricultural lands) in the Philippines. The rural folks, who had been living in these haciendas and cultivating them generation after generation became tenants. Naturally, they resented the loss of their lands which belonged to their ancestors since pre-Spanish times; legally, however, the friars were recognized as legal owners of said lands because they obtained royal titles of ownership from

the Spanish crown. No wonder, these friar haciendas became hotbeds of agrarian revolts, in as much as the Filipino tenants regarded the friar owners as usurpers of their ancestral lands. One of these bloody agrarian revolts was the agrarian upheaval in 1745-1746.

As early as in 1768 Governor Anda, realizing the danger of the friar-owned haciendas to Filipino-Spanish relations, strongly recommended to the Madrid government the sale of the friar estates. Unfortunately, his wise recommendation was ignored. Filipino odium towards the friars, who turned hacienda owners, persisted unabated until the end of Spanish rule.

Rizal, whose family and relatives were tenants of the Dominican Estate of Calamba, tried to initiate agrarian reforms in 1887, but in vain. His advocacy of agrarian reforms ignited the wrath of the Dominican friars, who retaliated by raising the rentals of the lands leased by his family and other Calamba tenants.

According to Rizal, the friar ownership of the productive lands contributed to the economic stagnation of the Philippines during the Spanish period. In his famous essay "*Sobre la Indolencia de los Filipinos*" (Indolence of the Filipinos), he wrote:¹⁷

The fact that the best plantations, the best tracts of land in some provinces . . . are in the hands of the religious corporations . . . is one of the reasons why many towns do not progress inspite of the efforts of their inhabitants. We will be met with the objection, as an argument on the other side, that those which do not belong to them. They surely are! Just as their brethren in Europe, in founding their convents, knew how to select the best valley, the best uplands for the cultivation of the vine or the production of beer, so also the Philippine monks have known how to select the best towns, the beautiful plains, the well-watered fields, to make of them rich plantations. For some time the friars have deceived many by making them believe that if these plantations were prospering, it was because they were under their care, and the indolence of the natives was thus emphasized; but they forgot that in some provinces where they have not been able to get possession of the best tracts of land, their plantations, like Bauan and Liang, are inferior

to Taal, Balayan and Lipa, regions cultivated entirely by the natives without any monkish interference whatsoever.

The Guardia Civil. The last hated symbol of Spanish tyranny was the Guardia Civil (Constabulary) which was created by the Royal Decree of February 12, 1852, as amended by the Royal Decree of March 24, 1888, for the purpose of maintaining internal peace and order in the Philippines. It was patterned after the famous and well-disciplined Guardia Civil in Spain.

While it is true that the Guardia Civil in the Philippines had rendered meritorious services in suppressing the bandits in the provinces, they later became infamous for their rampant abuses, such as maltreating innocent people, looting their carabaos, chickens, and valuable belongings, and raping helpless women. Both officers (Spaniards) and men (natives) were ill-trained and undisciplined, unlike the Guardia Civil in Spain who were respected and well-liked by the populace.

Rizal actually witnessed the atrocities committed by the Guardia Civil on the Calamba folks. He himself and his mother had been victims of the brutalities of the lieutenant of the Guardia Civil.

It was natural that Rizal directed his stinging satire against the hated Guardia Civil. Through Elias in *Noli Me Tangere*, he exposed the Guardia Civil as a bunch of ruthless ruffians good only "for disturbing the peace" and "persecuting honest men". He proposed to improve the military organization by having it be composed of good men who possessed education and good principles and who were conscious of the limitations and responsibilities of authority and power. "So much power in the hands of men, ignorant men filled with passions, without moral training, of untried principles," he said through Elias, "is a weapon in the hands of a madman in a defenseless multitude."

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