

La solidaridad essay



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The roots of the Propaganda Movement lay far back in in the late 18th and early 19th century. When Spain opened the borders of the Philippines to international trade, she too opened it to the contemporary currents of European political thoughts. It were mainly economic reasons which led to an educational reform in the Philippines. The friarocracy had long used its control of education to maintain its position. So the teaching of foreign languages and scientific and technical subjects were not permitted. In 1863 the Spanish government introduced a system of public education that opened new opportunities to Filipinos for better education.

Spain itself was having trouble adjusting to the liberal democratic yearnings of 19th century Europe. In 1868, a liberal revolution in Spain deposed Queen Isabella II and gave rise to the short lived First Republic. A liberal governor, General Carlos Maria de la Torre, was appointed at this time to the Philippines. He abolished censorship and extended to Filipinos the rights of free speech and assembly contained in the Spanish constitution of 1869. The popular governor did not last long. He was to be replaced in 1871 by Rafael de Izquierdo who promptly rescinded the liberal measures.

The following year in Cavite, 200 Filipino recruits revolted and murdered their Spanish officers. The Spanish suppressed the revolt brutally and used the opportunity to implicate the liberal critics of Spanish authority in an imaginary wider conspiracy. Many liberals were arrested or driven into exile. A military court condemned the reformist Fathers Jose Burgos, Mariano Gomez and Jacinto Zamora to death. The three priests were garroted publicly on February 20, 1872 and made martyrs for the nationalist cause. Between

1872 and 1892, a national consciousness was growing among the Filipino emigres who had settled in Europe.

In the freer atmosphere of Europe, these emigres - liberals exiled in 1872 and students attending European universities- fulfilled their desire to form a purely Filipino organization with the establishment of La Solidaridad in Barcelona on December 13, 1888. Rizal's cousin, Galicano Apacible, became president of La Solidaridad. Among the other officers were Graciano Lopez-Jaena as vice-president and Mariano Ponce as treasurer. Rizal, in London at the time, was named Honorary President. Unfortunately, Apacible could not hold the wrangling reformists together. The prestige of Rizal and the political wisdom of del Pilar was needed to unite the

Filipinos in Spain and to coordinate their efforts. But finally, on February 15, 1889, the Filipino propagandists were able to get together behind a new publication which they called La Solidaridad, and which for its more than five years of its existence became the principal organ of the propaganda movement. It existed up to November 15, 1895. Its first editor was Graciano Lopez-Jaena, a noted orator and pamphleteer who had left the islands in 1880 after the publication of his satirical short novel (Fray Botod (Brother Fatso), an unflattering portrait of a provincial friar). He was soon succeeded by Marcelo H. del Pilar.

La Solidaridad was a political propaganda paper with a liberal, reformist orientation dedicated to the task of fighting reaction in all its forms. The paper stood for the moderate aims of representation of the Philippines in the Cortes, or Spanish parliament; secularization of the clergy; legalization of

Spanish and Filipino equality; creation of a public school system independent of the friars; abolition of the polo (labor service) and vandala (forced sale of local products to the government); guarantee of basic freedoms of speech and association; and equal opportunity for Filipinos and Spanish to enter government service.

The editorial of the first issue of La Solidaridad expressed its aim: “ Our aspirations are modest, very modest. Our program, aside from being simple, is clear: to combat reaction, to stop all retrogressive steps, to extol and adopt liberal ideas, to defend progress; in a word, to be a propagandist, above all, of democratic ideas in order to make these supreme in all nations here and across the seas. The aims, therefore, of La Solidaridad are described as to collect, to gather, libertarian ideas which are manifested daily in the field of politics, science, art, literature, commerce, agriculture and industry.

We shall also discuss all problems relating to the general interest of the nation and seek solutions to those problems in high-level and democratic manner. With regard to the Philippines, since she needs the most help, not being represented in the Cortes, we shall pay particular attention to the defense of her democratic rights, the accomplishment of which is our patriotic duty. That nation of eight million souls should not, must not be the exclusive preserve of theocracy and traditionalism.

The writers for La Solidaridad were mostly Filipinos, such as Marcelo H. del Pilar (Plaridel), a reformist lawyer, who was active in the anti-friar movement and fled to Spain in 1888, Dr. Jose Rizal (Laon Laan), Mariano Ponce (Naning,

Kalipulo, Tigbalang), Antonio Luna (Taga Ilog), Jose Ma. Panganiban (Jomapa), Dr. Pedro Paterno, Antonio Ma. Regidor, Isabelo delos Reyes, Eduardo de Lete and Jose Alejandrino. Some friends of the Propaganda Movement also contributed, notably Professor Blumentritt (Austrian geographer and ethnologist) and Dr. Morayta (Spanish Historian, university professor and statesman).

The fact, that they wrote in Spanish, was certainly an important factor limiting the influence of the propagandists, because Spanish was a language virtually unknown to the masses. Additionally censorship seriously limited the inflow of such reading matter and made it`s possession very risky. But despite all the foregoing, the influence of the Propaganda on the revolution cannot be discounted.

True, La Solidaridad itself, Rizal`s novels, and other propaganda material had limited circulation, but these reached the local ilustrados who in most instances came to lead the revolutionary forces in their provinces. The fund-raising efforts of local committees and masonic lodges and the clandestine attempts to distribute these materials involved more individuals in the campaign for reforms. The very attempts of the government to stop the entry of La Solidaridad and prevent its distribution highlighted the lack of freedoms that the propagandists were condemning.

Even if readership was small, seepage of information to other groups certainly occurred. And because what the propagandists wrote were accurate reflections of reality, a feeling of empathy developed wherever news of their work was heard. The articulation of their own feelings of

oppression heightened the ferment of the people and herein lay the continuity between reformism and revolution despite their diametrically opposed means and goals. The Propaganda Movement languished after Rizal's arrest and the collapse of the Liga Filipina.

La Solidaridad published its last issue on November 15th, 1895), M. H. del Pilar wrote his farewell editorial saying : " We are persuaded that no sacrifices are too little to win the rights and the liberty of a nation that is oppressed by slavery. " In 1896 both del Pilar and Lopez Jaena died in Barcelona, worn down by poverty and disappointment. The Filipino colony in Spain had established a fortnightly review, published first in Barcelona and later in Madrid, to enlighten Spaniards on their distant colony, and Rizal wrote for it from the start.

Its name was La Solidaridad, and it pushed for the same laws and the same privileges for the Peninsula and the possessions overseas. From the Philippines came news of a contemptible attempt to reach Rizal through his family—one of many similar petty persecutions. His sister Lucia's husband had died and the corpse was refused interment in consecrated ground, upon the pretext that the dead man, who had been exceptionally liberal to the church and was of unimpeachable character, had been negligent in his religious duties.

Another individual with a notorious record of longer absence from confession died about the same time, and his funeral took place from the church without demur. The ugly feature about the refusal to bury Hervosa was that the telegram from the friar parish-priest to the Archbishop at Manila in

asking instructions, was careful to mention that the deceased was a brother-in-law of Rizal. Doctor Rizal wrote a scorching article for La Solidaridad under the caption “ An Outrage,” and took the matter up with the Spanish Colonial Minister, then Becerra, a professed Liberal.

But that weakling statesman, more liberal in words than in actions, did nothing. That the union of Church and State can be as demoralizing to religion as it is disastrous to good government seems sufficiently established by Philippine incidents like this, in which politics was substituted for piety as the test of a good Catholic, making marriage impossible and denying decent burial to the families of those who differed politically with the ministers of the national religion.

Of all his writings, the article in which Rizal speaks of this indignity to the dead comes nearest to exhibiting personal feeling and rancor. Yet his main point is to indicate generally what monstrous conditions the Philippine mixture of religion and politics made possible. For La Solidaridad, Jose Rizal often wrote under the pen name Laong Laan. In the photo, he is with the publication’s editor Marcelo H. del Pilar and treasurer Mariano Ponce.