

Rizal life and works

Religion



INTRODUCTION

Rizal left Europe for Hong Kong, where he lived from November 1891 to June 1892. His reasons for leaving Europe were:

life was unbearable in Europe because of his political differences with M. H. del Pilar and other Filipinos in Spain. to be near his idolized Philippines and family.

FAREWELL TO EUROPE

Rizal left Ghent for Paris on October 3, 1891

He proceeded by train to Marseilles and on October 18, he boarded the steamer Melbourne bound for Hong Kong. He brought with him a letter of recommendation by Juan Luna for Manuel Camus, a compatriot living in Singapore, and 600 copies of the Fili Manuel Camus

-During that time, he was a student and was made as a mason on October 12, 1898 at Zetland in the East Lodge No 508 in Singapore under the jurisdiction of the M. W. Grand Lodge of England. He then became a Senator of the Philippines on his later years. There were over 80 first class passengers - mostly Europeans, including 2 Spaniards He befriended many missionaries and one of them is Fr. Fuchs, a Tyrolese, which he enjoyed playing chess with. He even wrote to Blumentritt saying: “.. He is a fine fellow, a Father Damaso without pride and malice..”

RIZAL AND THE GERMAN LADIES

“ One evening at a dinner time the passengers were having their meal in the dining room. Rizal; being the only Asian, was eating alone at one table. Near

him was a bigger table occupied by some German ladies who were gaily eating and gossiping about the lone Asian male who was quietly taking his meal. Rizal, who was fluent in German, understood what the talkative German ladies were saying about him, but he simply kept silent, letting the ladies enjoy their gossip.

Suddenly the fast running steamer encountered a heavy squall and the door of the dining room was blown open. Nobody among the passengers who were busy eating stood up to close the door. A lady said to her companions in German : “ If this man in front of us were a gentleman he would close the door”. Upon hearing her remark, Rizal, without saying a word, rose and closed the door, after which he resumed his seat. He then conversed with German ladies in perfect German. Of course, the German ladies were very much embarrassed, and, thereafter they treated Rizal with admiration and respect, despite his brown skin, for he was a cultured gentleman.”

ARRIVED IN HONG KONG

November 20, 1891 - Rizal arrived in Hong Kong

He was welcomed by the Filipino residents, especially his old friend, Jose Ma. Basa. He then established his residence at No. 5 D' Aguilar Street, No. 2 Rednaxola Terrace, where he also opened his medical clinic. December 1, 1891 - he wrote his parents asking their permission to return home. On the same date, his brother-in-law, Manuel T. Hidalgo, sent him a letter, relating the sad news of the “ deportation of twenty-five persons from Calamba, including father, Neneng, Sisa, Lucia, Paciano, and the rest of us.” Also stated in his letter that he was preparing a letter to the Queen Regent of

Spain explaining the Calamba situation in order to secure justice. Even saying such as : “ If the Queen will not listen, we will write to Queen Victoria of England appealing for protection in the name of humanity...”

FAMILY REUNION IN HONG KONG

Before Christmas of 1891, he was gladdened by the arrival of his father, brother and Silvestre Ubaldo (his brother-in-law) in Hong Kong. Not long afterwards his mother and sisters Lucia, Josefa , and Trinidad also arrived. January 31, 1892 - he wrote to Blumentritt recounting their pleasant life in Hong Kong, as follows: “ Here we are all living together, my parents, sisters, and brother in peace and far from persecutions they suffered in the Philippines. They are very much pleased with the English government.”

OPHTHALMIC SURGEON IN HONG KONG

Dr. Lorenzo P. Marques - a friend and admirer who helped him to build up a wide clientele. He successfully operated on his mother’s left eye so that she was able to read and write again. January 31, 1892 - writing to Blumentritt, he said :

“ Here I practise as a doctor and I have . . . Here many sick of influenza because there is an epidemic. Through the newspaper I am informed that this sickness is also causing ravages in Europe. I hope you and your esteemed family will be spared. In our house, my mother, my brother-in-law, and one of my sister are sick. Thank God, they are out of danger.” Rizal was given moral support and substantial aid in his medical practice in Hong Kong from some of his friends in Europe. Mr. Boustead (the father of Nelly Boustead)

- wrote to him on March 21, 1892, praising him for his medical profession Dr. Ariston Bautista Lin
- sent him a congratulatory letter and a book on Diagnostic Pathology by Dr. H. Virchow and another medical book entitled Traite Diagnostique by Mesnichock. Don Antonio Vergel de Dios
- offered him his services for the purchase of medical books and instruments which he might need in his profession. Rizal possessed the qualities of a great ophthalmic surgeon. In the words of Dr. Geminiano de Ocampo, a distinguished Filipino ophthalmologist: " He had all the qualities that would make an ideal ophthalmic surgeon - a keen and analytical intellect, lightness of touch and artistry of a painter, courage and imperturbability, a broad and deep knowledge of medicine and ophthalmology, and last but not the least, he had been properly and adequately trained by master ophthalmic surgeons."

BORNEO COLONIZATION PROJECT

Rizal conceived the establishment of a Filipino colony in North Borneo (Sabah) He planned to move those Filipino families to that British-owned island and carve out of its virgin wilderness a " New Calamba" March 7, 1892 - he went to Sandakan on board the ship Menon to negotiate with the British authorities for the establishment of a Filipino colony. His mission was successful.

The British Authorities of Borneo were willing to give the Filipino colonists, 100, 000 acres of land, a beautiful harbor and a good government for 999 years, free of all charges. By April 20, he was back in Hong Kong.

Rizal friends in Europe enthusiastically endorsed his Borneo colonization project. Lopez Jaena express his desire to join the project and wrote to Rizal saying:

“ I have a great desire of joining you. Reserve for me there a piece of land where I can plant sugarcane. I shall go there. . . to dedicate myself to the cultivation of sugarcane and the making of sugar. Send me further details.”

Hidalgo, on the other hand, objected to the colonization project saying:

“ This idea about Borneo, is no good. Why should we leave the Philippines, this beautiful country of ours? And besides what will people say? Why have we made all these sacrifices? Why should we go to a foreign land without first exhausting all means for the welfare of the country which nurtured us from our cradles? Tell me that!” The infamous Weyler, whom the Cubans called “ The Butcher” was relieved of his gubernatorial office. A new governor general Eulogio Despujol, the Count of Caspe, announced to the Filipino people a fine program of government Rizal sent him a letter of felicitation (dated December 23, 1891) and offering his cooperation, but instead the governor did not even acknowledge receipt of his letter.

Rizal wrote a second letter (dated March 21, 1892), in this second letter, he requested the governor general to permit the landless Filipinos to establish themselves in Borneo. Despujol, did not give Rizal the “ courtesy of a reply”. Instead, he notified the Spanish consul general in Hong Kong to tell Rizal that he could not approve the Filipinoimmigrationto Borneo, alleging that, “ the Philippines lacked laborers” and “ it was not very patriotic to go off and cultivate foreign soil”

WRITINGS IN HONG KONG

He wrote “ Ang Mga Karapatan Nang Tao” (a tagalog translation of “ The Rights of Man” proclaimed by the French Revolution in 1789) About the same time (1891), he wrote “ A la Nacion Española” (To the Spanish Nation), which is an appeal to Spain to right the wrongs done to the Calamba tenants. Another proclamation, entitled “ Sa Mga Kababayan” (To my Countrymen) was written in December 1891 explaining the Calamba agrarian situation. Rizal contributed articles to the British daily newspaper, The Hong Kong Telegraph, whose editor, Mr. Frazier Smith, was his friend.

March 2, 1892 - Rizal wrote “ Una Visita a la Victoria Gaol” (A Visit to Victoria Gaol), an account of his visit to the colonial prison of Hong Kong. In this article he contrasted the cruel Spanish prison system with the modern and more humane prison system. He wrote an article entitled “ Colonisation du British North Borneo, par de Familles de Iles Philippines” (Colonization of British north Borneo by families from the Philippine Islands) to elucidate his Borneo colonization project He elaborated on the same idea in another article in Spanish, “ Proyecto de Colonizacion del British North Borneo por los Filipinos” (Project of the Colonization of British North Borneo by the Filipinos) June 1892 - he wrote “ La Mano Roja” (The Red Hand) which denounces the frequent outbreaks of intentional fires in Manila. “ Constitution of the Liga Filipina”

- printed in 1892, was the most important writing made by Rizal during his Hong Kong sojourn To deceive the Spanish authorities, the printed copies carries the false information that the printing was done by the LONDON PRINTING PRESS, No. 25, Khulug Street, London. The idea of establishing the

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Liga Filipina was originally conceived by Jose Ma. Basa, but it was Rizal who wrote its constitution and realized its establishment.

DECISION TO RETURN TO MANILA

May 1892 -Rizal made up his mind to return to Manila

The decision was spurred by the following:

1.) To confer with Governor Despujol regarding his Borneo colonization project.

2.) To establish the Liga Filipina in Manila

3.) To prove that Eduardo de Lete was wrong in attacking him in Madrid that he being comfortable and safe in Hong Kong, had abandoned the country's cause. Lete's attack which was printed in La Solidaridad on April 15, 1892, portrayed Rizal as cowardly, egoistic, opportunistic - a patriot in words only.

Rizal protested to Del Pilar saying:

" I am more convinced that yourself to be carried away. Friend or enemy, if the article has harmed me, it would harm more the interests of the Philippines. Who knows, however, if after all it was for the best; it has shaken me awake, and long after a long silence I enter the field anew. .. I am going to activate the Propaganda again and fortify the Liga." To Ponce, Rizal confided on May 23, 1892:

" I am very sorry that Del Pilar allowed the article to be published because it will lead many to believe that there is really a schism among us. I believe that we can well have little misunderstanding and personal differences among ourselves, without exhibiting them in public. . As for myself. . . I always welcome criticisms because they improve those who wish to be improved"

LAST HONG KONG LETTERS

On June 19, 1892 he spent his 31st birthday in Hong Kong.

Evidently, he had premonition of his death, for the following day, June 20 he wrote two letters which he sealed, inscribed in each envelop " to be opened after my death," and gave them to his friend, Dr. Marques for safekeeping. The first letter was addressed TO MY PARENTS, BRETHREN, AND FRIENDS, is as follows:

" The affection that I have ever professed for you suggests this step, and time alone can tell whether or not it is sensible. The outcome judges things according to the consequences; but whether the result be favorable or unfavorable, it may always be said that duty urged me, so if I die in doing it, it will not matter.

I realize how much suffering I have caused you yet I do not regret what I have done. Rather, if I had to begin over again I should do just the same, for what I have done has been only in pursuit of my duty. Gladly do I go to expose myself to peril, not as an expiation of misdeeds for in this matter I believe myself guiltless of any, but to complete my work and so that I, myself, may offer the examples of which I have always preached.

A man ought to die for duty and his principles. I hold fast to every idea which I have advanced as to the condition and future of our country, and shall willingly die for it, and even more willingly sacrifice all to secure justice and peace for you. With pleasure, then, I risk life to save so many innocent persons - so many nieces and nephews, so many children of friends, and children too of others who are not even friend - who are suffering on my

account. What am I? A bachelor, practically without a family and sufficiently undeceived as to life. I have had many disappointments and the future before me is gloomy, and will be gloomy if light does not illuminate it with dawn of a better day for my native land.

On the other hand, there are many persons, filled with hope and ambition, who perhaps might be happier if I were dead, and then I hope my enemies would be satisfied and stop persecuting so many entirely innocent people. To a certain extent their hatred is justifiable as to myself, and my parents and relatives. Should fate go against me, you will all understand that I shall die happy in the thought that my death will end all your troubles. Return to our country and may you be happy in it. Till the last moment of my life I shall be thinking of you and wishing you all good fortune and happiness."

The second letter was addressed TO THE FILIPINOS, and is as follows:

" The step which I am taking, or rather am about to take, is undoubtedly risky, and it is unnecessary to say that I have considered it for some time. I understand that almost every one is opposed to it; but I know also that hardly anybody else understands what is in my heart. I cannot live on seeing so many suffer unjust persecution on my account; I cannot bear the sight of my sisters and their numerous families treated like criminals. I prefer death and cheerfully shall relinquish life to free so many innocent persons from such unjust persecution.

I appreciate the fact that at present the future of our country gravitates in some degree around me, that at my death many will feel triumphant, and thus, many are now wishing for my fall. But what of it? I hold duties of

conscience above all else. I have obligations to the families who suffer, to my aged parents whose sight strikes me to the heart; I know that I alone, only my death can make them happy, returning them to their native land to a peaceful life at home. I am all my parents have, but our country has many more sons who can take my place and even do my work better.

Besides I wish to show those who deny us the boon of patriotism that we know how to die for duty and principles. What matters death, if one dies for what one loves, for native land and beings held dear?

If I thought that I were the only resource for the consummation of a policy of progress in the Philippines and were I convinced that my countrymen were going to make use of my services, perhaps, I should hesitate about taking this step; but there are others who can take my place, who can do my services that are not utilize, and I am reduced to inactivity.

Always have I loved our unhappy land, and I am sure that I shall continue loving it till my last moment, in case men prove unjust to me. My career, my life, my happiness - and all I have sacrificed for love of it. Whatever my fate I shall die blessing it and longing for the dawn of its redemption.

June 21, 1892 - Rizal penned another letter in HK for Governor Despujol. In this letter, he informed the governor general of his coming to Manila and placed himself under the protection of the Spanish government. June 21, 1892 - (On the same date) Rizal and his sister Lucia left HK for Manila. They carried a special passport or " safe-conduct" issued by the Spanish consul-general in Hong Kong.

RIZAL FALLS INTO SPANISH TRAP

The Spanish consul-general sent a cablegram to Governor Despujol that the victim “ is in the trap”. On the same day a secret case was filed in Manila against Rizal and his followers “ for anti-religious and anti-patriotic agitation” Despujol ordered his secretary, Luis de la Torre, to find out if Rizal was naturalized as a German citizen, as was rumored, so that he might take proper action against on “ who had the protection of a strong nation” Meanwhile, Rizal and his sister were peacefully crossing the China Sea. They were fully unaware of the Spanish duplicity.