

THE
REVOLT
OF THE
MASSES

T. A. Agoncillo

The Revolt of the Masses

The Story of Bonifacio
and the Katipunan

By

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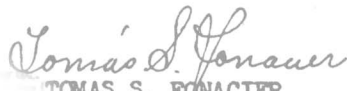
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In publishing Teodoro A. Agoncillo's The Revolt of the Masses: the Story of Bonifacio and the Katipunan, the College of Liberal Arts, University of the Philippines, is making available, to the academic community and to the general reading public, a public document which is of great value to a proper understanding of the cultural history of the Philippines.


This work was entered in a contest conducted by the Republic in 1947-1948 and was unanimously adjudged the best entry by a board of judges composed of Jaime C. de Veyra, as chairman, and Eulogio B. Rodriguez and Faustino Aguilar, as members — all reliable historians, well-known men-of-letters, and loyal public servants.


TOMAS S. FONACIER
Dean



Bonifacio Monument at Caloocan, Rizal

FOREWORD

T WAS with great difficulty and trepidation that I was finally able to persuade myself to sit down to attempt a biography of Andres Bonifacio. For no one who has gone through the available sources on the first epoch of the Philippine Revolution, which includes, necessarily, the history of the *Katipunan* and its plebeian founder, can fail to note with dismay and with a sense of loss, that it is practically impossible for any one man to write a fairly complete story of Bonifacio's life. For the Plebeian Hero, the first truly Filipino democrat, suffered from two disadvantages.

On the one hand was his lowly and obscure origin, and on the other was the plethora of supposedly reliable documents on his trial and death. Because of his obscure origin, none of his contemporaries, not even his sister, could give clear and accurate data on his early life. Indeed, because he was a mere *bodeguero*, they did not suspect that he would become a national figure and so do not remember much about him. I tried hard to pump dry his living contemporaries to obtain necessary and important information—to no avail! None of them could characterize him either as a man or as a leader of the *Katipunan* which he made into a vibrant force that challenged Spanish might and prestige.

On the other hand, the numerous documents on the trial and death of Bonifacio make it sufficiently taxing for a student of the period to pick out which are re-

liable and which are not. Some of the accounts were obviously manufactured by certain *dramatis personae* to make themselves appear in good light; others contain accounts of incidents that never happened. There was, too, the play of personal prejudices, and out of this welter of confusing opinions and narratives, one who is not careful enough in one's researches comes out of the labyrinth like a dazed man blinking in the glare of the sun after long hours spent in a dark room.

In dealing with Andres Bonifacio and the *Katipunan*, I have laid more emphasis on the latter than on its founder and organizer, firstly, because of the dearth of materials on his life, and secondly, because it is my belief that Bonifacio can best be seen and appreciated against the backdrop of the revolutionary society. He could not have been greater than the *Katipunan*. Nor could he have risen above it. To understand him, one must understand the *Katipunan*. He looms great because of the society. He must, therefore, be seen in and through the *Katipunan*, and this method of unraveling the thin and scattered threads of his life is valid only because of the lack of materials.

In examining my sources of information, I have adopted the attitude of friendly hostility. It has been my experience that most of the errors in the difficult task of interpretation—which, after all, is the most important in any book—spring from the scholar's uncritical attitude. He takes for granted that the fame of an author is sufficient guaranty of reliability and competence. Such mental outlook smacks of hypocrisy and cowardice. I have, therefore, dismissed this

line of reasoning as inadequate. In this book, I have subjected my sources to a severe scrutiny, looked for loopholes, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies in order to arrive at a balanced conclusion. Ricarte, for instance, hitherto regarded as incontrovertible, is, after a careful examination, not always accurate and reliable. So is General Pio del Pilar. So are certain documents on the trial and death of Bonifacio. And so are some of the opinions expressed by the great scholars Epifanio de los Santos and Teodoro M. Kalaw. I shall probably hear loud protests and whispered innuendoes, but I invite the potential objectors to my method to read my Notes carefully, for in them I have embodied the reasons for repudiating some of the claims of famous scholars, for dismissing this authority and for accepting that document.

No controversial points are discussed in the main body of the book. Only my own conclusions are there set forth, whereas the arguments to support them are sufficiently clarified, I hope, in the Notes. This method, I believe, makes for easy reading and saves the readers from being rudely interrupted in their reading. To include the discussions of doubtful points and the footnotes in the main text would be to make the book a dull and protracted law brief. It is as if in the midst of a lively conversation between two friends, a maid suddenly appeared to tell the host that a salesman was at the door. In the second place, I refuse to argue the positions I have taken in the main narrative, believing, likewise, that it is improper of me to dispute things with my visitor—in this case, the reader—in the sala. I have thought it best to argue in the backroom—in the Notes at the end of the book.

With the help of General Emilio Aguinaldo, who was very cooperative with me, I was able to throw light on hitherto obscure and highly controversial episodes, thereby correcting serious mistakes and misconceptions about some phases of the Revolution. I trust that with the data I have included in this book, and which I have interpreted, other students of the Revolution will be inspired to carry on where I left off. If this leads to the writing of a better book in the near or distant future, I shall consider my efforts not wasted and my work not written in vain.

THE AUTHOR

MANILA, 12 April 1948

* * *

N. B.:

In writing the chapters "Of Laws and Men" and "The Summing Up," I relied mostly on the English translations of the documents on Bonifacio's trial, since the original documents were then unavailable. I deduced from the translations that a forgery must have been committed in order to make it appear that General (then Colonel) Pantaleon Garcia was the Judge Advocate who presided over the trial of the Bonifacio brothers.

Months after the present work was adjudged the winner, I secured photostats of the original documents of the trial. I compared Garcia's alleged signature on the 1897 documents with that I found on two 1899 documents and with the one on the back of Garcia's portrait he gave to Mr. Antonio K. Abad in 1930. Gen-

eral Garcia's signature had not undergone any substantial change since 1899. However, a comparative study of the signatures on the 1897 and the 1899 documents shows that there exist obvious differences between the signatures on the two sets of documents. In the first place, there are strokes in the 1897 documents that are, or what appear to be, imitations of Garcia's strokes. In the second place, Garcia is shown to have signed his full name on some 1897 documents; only "Garcia" on a few; and "P. Garcia" on others. On the other hand, Garcia consistently signed "P. Garcia" both on the 1899 documents and the 1930 portrait. To make this clear, I reproduce for this edition facsimiles of Garcia's signature in 1899 and 1930 and of his alleged signature in 1897.

In view of my findings, I do not feel compelled to revise my original conclusions. On the contrary, the photostats have strengthened my arguments and the conclusions deduced from them. My arguments are set forth in Note 20, Chapter XIV.

T. A. A.

MANILA, 26 August 1954

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The following persons and friends have, in some way or other, extended their cooperation in the preparation of the manuscript. I can do no more than express my deep appreciation of the help they rendered me.

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I feel, however, that I must be fair enough to relieve them of any responsibility that goes with authorship. The defects of the book are, therefore, my sole responsibility.

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One:

NIGHT OVER THE PHILIPPINES

 HE DECADE that closed the nineteenth century was for the Philippines a period of what may be termed *militant nationalism*. The *Katipunan*, a distinctively plebeian society, was the resultant of mutually inter-acting forces that gave away the texture and character of the Spanish administration in the Islands. As a secret society that sought to redress the accumulated grievances of generations, it had adopted a plan that was precisely the very consideration against which Spanish insolence and malfeasance were directed. Society, rotten to the core, exuded an odor that polluted the atmosphere for more than three hundred years and led to the migration of the Filipino intellectuals to healthier climes. The national economy, founded upon the medieval concept of master and slave, was paved for the introduction of a robust class of landed aristocracy, while the broad masses groaned

and grew numb under the spell of poverty and profound ignorance. Education was in the hands of the friars, and the friars waved the cloak of religion to dazzle the eyes of the Filipinos and so made them helots of a power that wanted to perpetuate itself by conveniently forgetting the principles and virtues for which it stood.

And so out of these forces, one influencing the other, a situation was created in which it was no longer possible to breathe and live freely, creatively, fully. It took a plebeian, whose class was the most intimately affected, to draw up a symbol in which life was the means and freedom the ultimate end.

WITH A CROSS in one hand and a sword in the other, the Spanish *conquistadores* imposed upon the Filipinos a feudal system that has persisted to this day although in a modified form. The power of the sword and the esoteric incantation of the friar had made it easy for the conquerors to divide the vast tracts of virgin land among the faithful Spanish subjects who facilitated the pacification and colonization of the "heathen" country.¹ Philippine feudalism thus seeded out of the *encomienda* system that in the course of a few years had become the chief source of criminal abuses on the part of the *encomenderos*. Tributes were paid by the Filipinos in exchange for being ruled ruthlessly and exploited by the new masters.² While theoretically the Filipinos were to be treated with utmost consideration³ and taught the rudiments of the Christian religion, yet the practice was so far in direct violation of Royal decrees that a duality of conscience was thereby instituted. Hence, the origin of the master-morality and the slave-morality under a regime of Christian piety and forgiveness. If, on the other hand, the early Spanish prelates took the side of the

exploited people against the opportunistic *encomenderos*, it was not because they were interested in the economic and social welfare of the Filipinos, but because they saw that the exploiters had failed miserably to instruct their wards in religion.

In time, the rapacious *encomenderos* were supplanted by the very class that had fought them here and in Spain. Even so, it was nothing more than a change of masters. The friar-estates increased and with this, came a sudden rise in income that made the priestly class an all-pervading power in all phases of Philippine life, on the one hand, and on the other, made the Filipinos utterly destitute. The insolently fatuous attitude of the friars and their administrators in the various estates they held and the unbearable exactions in taxes, tributes, and forced labor, led the peasants to commit atrocities that ordinarily would have been shocking, yet were natural and justified when no means were left to air their grievances and to get justice. In one of those moments of bitter resentment, the peasants of Lian and Nasugbu, Batangas, contending that their lands had been unjustly usurped from them and that they were even prohibited from getting wood, rattan, and bamboo to be used for their homes and daily chores, without paying the amount demanded by the friar-owners, attacked and plundered the houses of Jesuit fathers in 1745. The trouble spread rapidly to the town of Taal, and no amount of exhortation could persuade the peasants to go back to their homes and lay down their arms.

Nor was the uprising in Batangas an isolated case. Restlessness and discontent, followed by an appeal to arms, characterized the agrarian troubles in Silang, Kawit, Bakood (all in Cavite province), Hagunoy (Bulakan), Parañaque and San Mateo (now in Rizal province.) The

protests of the peasants, namely, that they were cheated of their lands "without leaving them the freedom of the rivers for their fishing, or allowing them to cut wood for their necessary use, or even to collect the wild fruits" or "to pasture on the hills near their villages the carabaos which they used for agriculture,"⁴ led the peasants of those towns to evade or refuse the payment of taxes imposed upon them by the administrators of the friar-estates—and, finally, to open rebellion. It was due to the increasing agrarian troubles, caused by heavy taxes and the trickery on the part of the friars, that the King of Spain issued a Royal decree (November 7, 1751) ordering the government authorities in the Islands "to exercise hereafter the utmost vigilance in order that the Indians . . . may not be molested by the religious, and that the latter should be kept in check in the unjust acts which they may in future attempt against not only those Indians but other natives of those islands."⁵ The decree was just, human and understanding, but it became no more than a dead letter.

So demoralized had the friars become that to find one who did not take advantage of his position in the social hierarchy was indeed a rare exception. The English traveler and chronicler, John Foreman, said:⁶

So large was the party opposed to the continuance of priestly influence in the Colony, that a six months' resident would not fail to hear of the many iniquities with which the Friars in general were reproached And it would be contrary to fact too, to pretend that the bulk of them supported their teaching by personal example. I have been acquainted with a great number of the priests and their offspring, too, in spite of their vow of chastity; whilst many lived in comparative luxury, notwithstanding their vow of poverty.

* * *