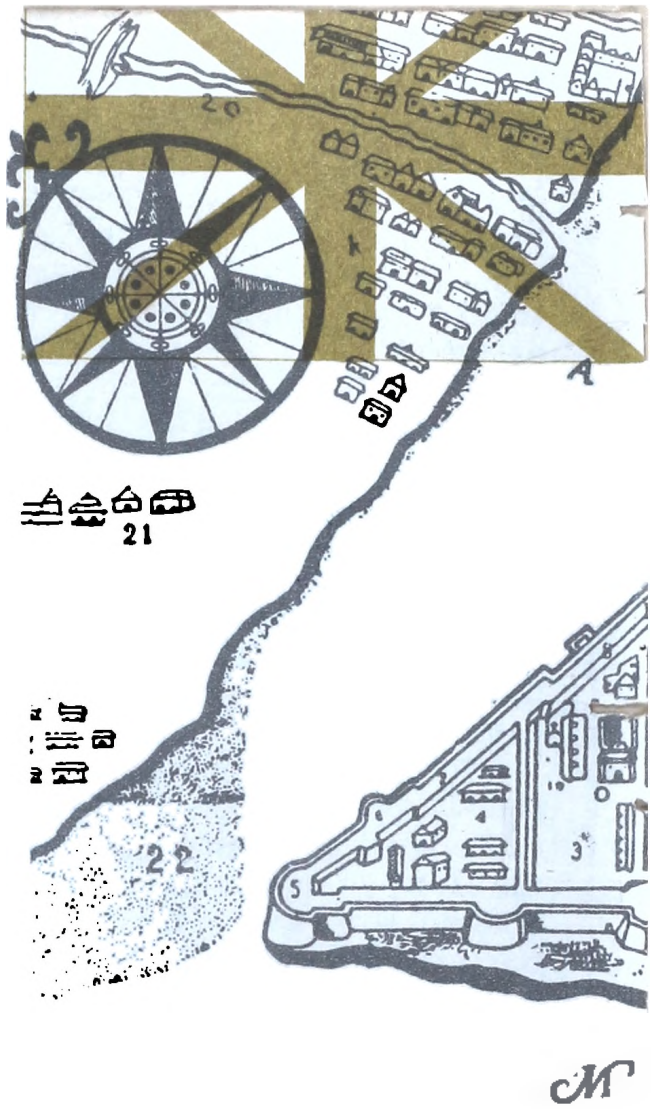
Pre - Revolution Philippines

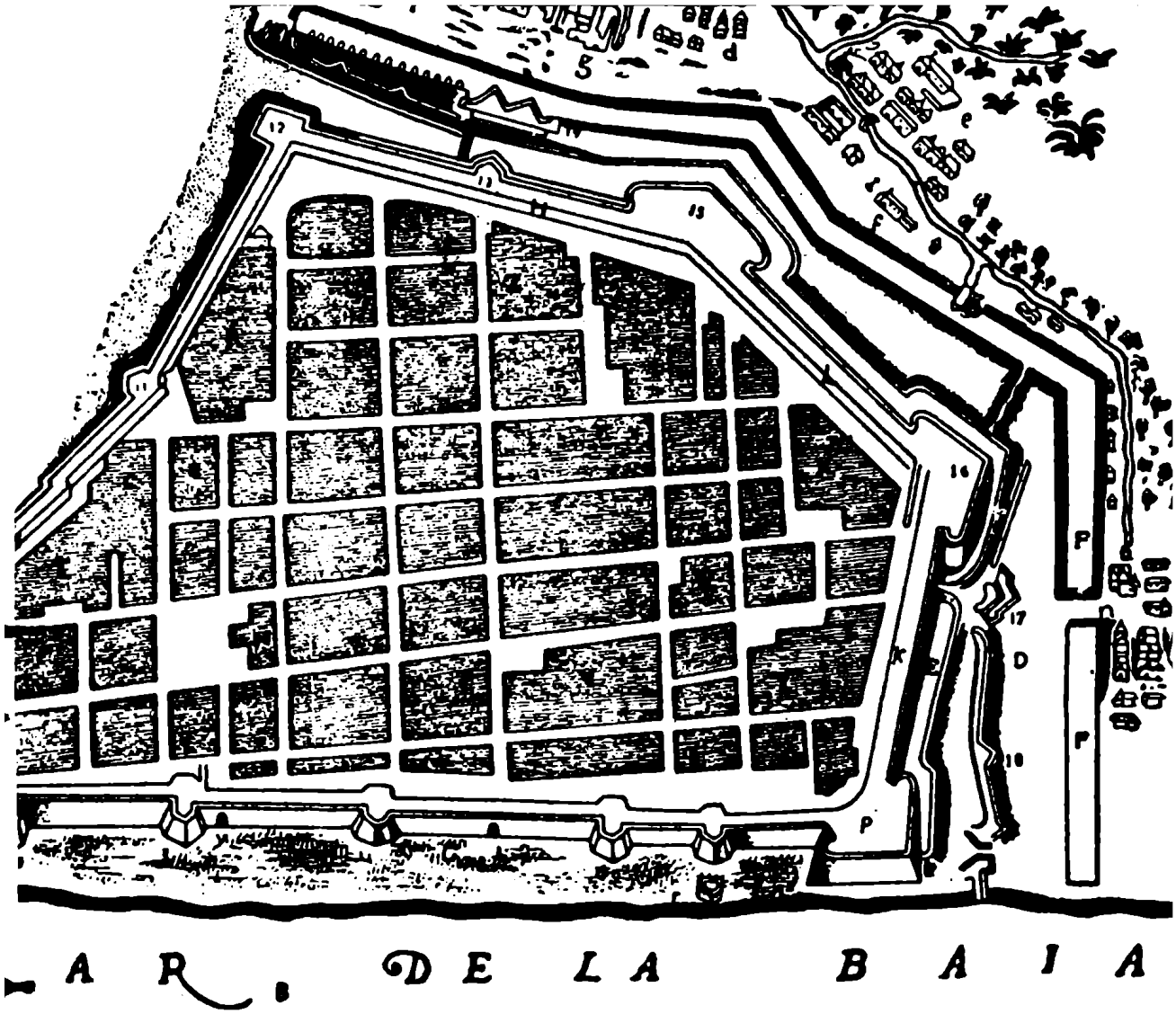


By Fr. Horacio de la Costa, S.J.

AN incident in the Seven Years' War was the capture and occupation of Manila by the British in 1762. By the terms of surrender the colonists promised to pay a ransom of four million pesos, in consideration of which the British guaranteed that their lives and property would be respected and the free practice of the Catholic religion allowed. Less than a million of the ransom money was collected in Manila itself. The local authorities signed a draft on the Madrid government for the rest, but it was not honored.

One of the members of the governor's council, Simon de Anda, escaped capture by fleeing to Bulacan. There, with the aid of friars stationed in the parishes, he succeeded in keeping the provinces of central Luzon loyal to Spain. He obtained possession of the silver bullion brought by the incoming galleon of that year, heating the British to it by a hair's breadth. Thus provided with the sinews of war, he was able to contain the invader within Manila, its suburbs, and the port of Cavite.

However, a formidable native broke out in the Ilocos re-



gion under the leadership of Diego Silang, to whom the British sent arms and encouragement; it was put down, but with difficulty. The Muslim Sulus and Magindanaus, emboldened by the apparent eclipse of Spanish power, redoubled their piratical raids on the Visayan settlements, while guerrilla bands and plain bandits ravaged the farms and cattle ranches of Luzon.

When the British abandoned their conquests in accordance with the Treaty of Paris (1763), the colony was in a very critial condition. The public treasury was empty, private fortunes had been wiped out, there was hun-

ger in the land, and the dangerous notion was spreading among the native population that the Spaniards were not, after all, invincible.

The attorney-general of the Philippines at the time, Francisco Leandro de Viana, presented the problem to Madrid in the clearest terms. Either the Philippines should be given up altogether, or measures should immediately be taken to build up its economy. Furthermore, this build-up should go beyond the point which had been reached before the British occupation, for the mother country was now in no position to make good the colony's annual deficits, as it had hitherto done.

But could the Philippines become self-supporting? Viana was confident it could, provided the Crown was willing to take the necessary steps: to increase the tribute, reduce graft, organize government monopolies in certain designated products, and form a state-sponsored commercial company which would exploit the possibilities of direct trade between Spain and the Philippines and invest part of its profits in the agricultural development of the country.

THESE PROPOSALS found favor with the ministers of Charles III, who derived their ideas of government from the philosophies of the French Enlightenment. The tribute was raised from 10 to 16 rials (two pesos) per native household. In 1785 a Royal Philippine Company was organized with an authorized capital of eight million pesos and a monopoly of all trade between Spain and the Philippines by way of the Cape of Good Hope. It was not, however, a success. The Manila merchants loooked dourly upon trade from which they derived such fantastic, if unpredictable profits. Moreover, the Philippines produced little at the time to interest the European market, in spite of the valiant efforts of an Economic Society of Friends of the Country to stimulate and indigo.

Thus, the Company ships had perforce to lade China goods for the return voyage; but since the Company bought these goods at Manila rather than at the source, it could not compete with the more enterprising merchants of other nations who went directly to Canton.

In 1792 the Company began to show a steady loss, and in 1843 it went out of business. However, it did serve at least in its early years of operation to inject new life into the almost petrified commerce of Manila, and a small proportion of its earnings was invested in agricultural development according to the terms of its charter.

What eventually balanced the colony's budget was neither direct taxation nor trade expansion but the revenues derived from government monopolies, especially that of tobacco. This was organized by an energetic governor, Don Jose Basco y Vargas, in 1782. The weed, which the Spaniards had brought over from Mexico, had long been familiar to Filipinos, but up to that time was grown chiefly for home consumption.

Basco now forbade its cultivation save in certain designated areas such as Gapan, in the present province of Nueva Ecija, and the Cagayan Valley. The planting, picking, drying and grading of the leaf was subjected to the most minute government control. The entire produce could be sold only to the government, at the government's price; what the government agents rejected was burned.

The baled tobacco was then transported under guard to the government factory in Manila, where it was manufactured into cigars and cigarettes. The better grades of these were reserved for export; the rest was sold in monopoly stores or **estanquillas** throughout the country, from which alone tobacco could be legally purchased.

OBVIOUSLY, a whole army of employees and revenue agents was required to operate the system; in spite—or possibly because — of which, speculation, bribery, extortion and enormous leakages took place at every step. Contraband trade in tobacco flourished, carried on by **tulisanes** or outlaws with the connivance of the law-abiding but tobacco-using population.

Nevertheless, imperfect though it was, crushingly unfair to the consumer and harmful to civic discipline, the monopoly did provide the government with a revenue more than sufficient to balance its budget. This obvious advantage counterbalanced the vigorous protests of thoughtful and public-spirited men, such as the distinguished Augustinian **savant** Fray Joaquin Martinez de Zuniga, and the monopoly was not finally abolished until 1882.

BESIDES PUTTING an end to the chronic embarrassment of the colonial treasury, the tobacco monopoly contributed to the economic development

of the country in a larger sense, namely, by helping to develop commercial agriculture. Until the second half of the eighteenth century agriculture in the Philippines was almost entirely one of subsistence. Each region—one might almost say each town—produced what it needed for its own consumption. What trade there was consisted chiefly in supplying farm products to the non-producers of Manila and the larger towns in exchange for imported manufactures.

The tobacco monopoly, by introducing agricultural specialization on a significant scale, created a demand for staples, such as rice, and hence stimulated their production for the market.

But it was not the only factor in this change. The British occupation of Manila, brief though it was, had called the attention of British traders, and subsequently of their American and French competitors, to the possibilities of the Philippines both as a market and as a source of agricultural produce, especially sugar. Spain had consistently kept the ports of her colonies closed to foreign trade, but in the eighteenth century this was no longer possible. After a period of unofficial intercourse (British trading vessels were admitted to Manila under Syrian or Indian registries if they paid a suitable fee to the right officials), the law was adjusted to the realities of the situation and Manila was thrown open to world trade in the same year that the Royal Philippine Company was liquidated.

Even before 1834, however, agents and factors for foreign trading companies had been allowed to reside in the Philippines, and it was to their entrepreneurial activities that the nascent sugar and hemp industries of the country owed much of their development.

The provinces around Manila were the first to feel the impact of the agricultural "revolution." Here, large tracts of uncultivated land were held by the religious orders or by educational and social service institutions administered by them. They had been acquired in some cases by purchase or legacy, but chiefly by royal grant, land being the most convenient form at the time in which to provide a hospital or a school with an endowment.

Thus the Hacienda de Buenavista in Tambobong constituted the endowment of the hospital of San Juan de Dios, while Dominican haciendas of Binang and Calamba helped to support the faculty and bursaries of the royal and pontifical University of Santo Tomas.

THIS IS how it came about that when the growth of commercial agriculture demanded new areas to be put under cultivation, it was principally these estates, or "friar lands," as they came to be known, which provided the necessary land for development. As a rule it was not the estate owners themselves who undertook the development. They preferred to lease the undeveloped portions of their haciendas at a fixed ground rent, called **canon,** to the more enterprising families of the surrounding towns. These lessees **(inquilinos)** then got together a group of cultivators **(kasamahan)**; lit., association) to help them clear the land and put it under the plough, the harvest of each field being equally divided between **inquilino** and **kasama** after the **canon** had been deducted.

Some **inquilinos,** such as Paciano Rizal of Calamba, went out with their **kasama** and personally directed the work on the farm; others were content to play the part of absentee landlords, leaving the actual farm work to their **kasama** while they devoted themselevs to trade or moneylending.

In any case, the **inquilinos** prospered steadily, and at least by the middle of the nineteenth century they formed a fairly distinct provincial upper class with enough resources to pay for an education beyond that of the generality of Filipinos. Some of them even sent their sons or younger brothers study in Europe; with what results we shall see in due course.

Meanwhile, the profits derived by the **inquilinos** from their leased land did not pass unnoticed by the hacienda owners, who began to increase the **canon** at regular intervals on the plea that land values were rising. This was deeply resented by the **inquilinos,** who argued that since any increase in the value of the land had been due solely to their efforts, they were in effect being penalized for their enterprise and industry.

The hacienda owners pointed out that prescinding from the fact that the land was theirs to rent out to whomsoever they pleased, the credit for its development was actually due not to the **inquilinos** but to the **kasama,** ,whom the **inquilinos** were deriving an unearned income by applying the labor of others to land that was not theirs, and still had the gall to complain that they were being oppressed.

The **kasama** took no part in this argument; or if they did they invariably sided with the **inquilinos** whom they knew and understood and to whom they were usually indebted. Thus, while the agricultural expansion of the late eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries led to hacienda development and growing prosperity in the provinces of central and southern Luzon, it also resulted in an antagonism between the hacienda owners on the one hand and the **inquilinos** and their **kasama** on the other, an antagonism which grew more and more bitter with the years.

SINCE, as was said above, most of the haciendas were owned by religious corporations or institutions controlled by them, this antagonism inevitably took on a definite anticlerical coloring. But the regular clergy in the Philippines were by this time under attack from more than one quarter. The ministers of the Bourbon Charles III (1759-1788) derived from the French Enlightenment not only their interest in administrative efficiency and economic progress but also their hostility to the Church as an obstacle to state absolutism.

The religious orders especially had, in their view, entirely too much power both at home and in the colonies. These overmighty subjects needed to be taught a lesson which would render them powerless to act as a check on the royal power, while remaining useful instruments of the royal will.

It was against the Society of Jesus, committed in a special manner by its constitutions to the service of the papacy, that the government of Charles III moved first. In 1767 a royal decree went forth expelling the Jesuits from all the Spanish dominions; this decree was faithfully executed in the Philippines the following year.

The remaining religious orders took over as best they might the parishes and missions vacated by the Jesuits. But the government had designs upon them too. A court prelate sympathetic to the official policy, Don Basilio Sancho, was appointed to the metropolitan See of Manila. By reviving an old controversy regarding episcopal visitation he forced the friars to resign many of their parishes, which he immediately filled with secular priests.

And since there was only a handful of Spanish clerics in the colony, he obtained the necessary personnel by hastily ordaining a number of insufficiently trained Filipino candidates for the priesthood. The Dominican encyclopedists Buzeta and Bravo have preserved the pleasantry which then became current in Manila, that "there were no oarsmen to be found for the river boats because the archbishop had ordained them all."

As was only to be expected, many of these Filipino priests turned out badly, and the government was compelled some years later to revise its policy

of secularization. Filipinos continue to be educated for the priesthood and ordained, but they were not often given parishes of their own. The majority were more or less permanently assigned to serve as assistants to the religious parish priests, and it was brought home to them in various ways that subordinate position was all they were believed to be capable of.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the Filipino clergy were becoming dissatisfied with their being thus deliberately and, in their view, unjustly held down; and they tended to blame the friars for this as well as their other troubles.

The return of the Jesuits in 1859 made matters worse. They were given the spiritual administration of the island of Mindanao, where the Recollects held a number of mission parishes. In order to compensate the latter for vacating these posts in favor of the Jesuits, they were given an equivalent number of parishes near Manila which the government took away from the secular clergy. The Filipino priests quite naturally protested this move, and in the anti-friar agitation which ensued among the most prominent were Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora.

IT IS NOT quite clear what connection these priests had with the mutiny which occurred in 1872 among the native troops stationed at Cavite. A military tribunal found them guilty of sedition and condemned them to death; but among Filipinos generally there was no doubt that their execution was judicial murder.

As Rizal was to say later, the very fact that the ecclesiastical authorities, who had no cause to look upon them with favor, refused to degrade them, was clear enough proof that they had done nothing seriously unbecoming their priestly character. In any case, the upshot was that the **inquilinos** of the friar lands were now joined by a considerable segment of the Filipino secular clergy in their hostile attitude towards the religious corporations.

This anti-friar sentiment was stimulated and stiffened, strangely enough, by certain elements in the Spanish community itself. The number of lay Spaniards in the Philippines steadily rose in the course of the nineteenth century due to the increased opportunities for trade and the expansion of the colonial bureaucracy. Immigration from the Iberian peninsula became especially significant after 1869, when the opening of the Suez Canal cut the length of the voyage from Cadiz to Manila to a month. Many of

the immigrants were needy office seekers with liberal sympathies, for the Liberal governments which succeeded one another with amazing rapidity from 1868 used colonial assignments as an inexpensive method of rewarding their faithful supporters.

Spanish liberalism being strongly anticlerical, the hostility to the friars among upper-class Filipinos received enthusiasitc support from this unexpected quarter. Spanish liberals established the first Masonic lodge in the Philippines, and the famous Petition of 1888 which called for the expulsion of the friars would not have been possible without their encouragement and active participation. It was, however, the Filipino liberals who suffered the consequences, either by imprisonment or deportation. Some of the deportees found their way to Spain, where they conducted the campaign for a thoroughgoing reform of the Spanish administration of the Philippines known in our history as the Propaganda Movement.

THAT reforms were needed is undeniable. The Bourbon reforms of the eighteenth century brought a measure of prosperity to the country, as we have seen; but the economic and social changes which they entailed gave rise to fresh problems and made the surviving institutions of an earlier colonialism even more demoralizing than were the liquor, areca-nut and cockpit monopolies.

The interminable searches, seizures and arrests necessary for their enforcement, and the opportunities they gave for extortion of every sort, won for revenue agents and especially for the Guardia Civil the cordial hatred of the common people.

At a higher level of administration, the **alcaldes mayores** or provincial governors were paid so poorly that it was practically an open invitation to them to supplement their income at the expense of the native population. Nor did the **alcalde mayor** lack the means to do this. He was in a particularly favorable position to make handsome profits by dealing in local products. He could buy cheap and sell dear, and he could "requisition" labor. No one could say him nay, for he combined in his own person the powers of civil governor, military commander and judge of first instance. For this reason the Laws of the Indies wisely forbade provincial officials under the severest penalties from engaging in trade during their tenure of office.

But this ordinance was more honored in the breach than in the observance; so much so that in the nineteenth century the royal government put aside all

pretense of enforcing it and allowed **alcaldes mayores** upon their appointment to purchase an **indulto de comercio** or license to trade. On the other hand they were deprived of their judicial powers when separate provincial courts were instituted; but this reform came too late in the nineteenth century to be of much effect.

The only provincial residents who could afford some kind of protection to the people against extortionate **alcaldes** were the friars in charge of parishes. They often did so, much to their credit. But while their courage in this matter won them the gratitude of humble folk, people who could leave no tangible record of their sentiments, it made them the objects of active dislike among a class of people who could and did express that dislike; both in Spain and the Philippines, through the printed word; and the printed word endures.

Unfortunately, nothing like a consistent policy of colonial reform could be expected from the central government. The Napoleonic wars were merely the blazing prelude to a "time of troubles" which held Spain in its grip throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. While constitutional conventions alternated with royal restorations, and liberal governments dissolved before military **pronunciamientos,** the proud empire which had been won by conquistador and missionary began to disintegrate.

Rebels and liberators smashed Spanish America into independent republics, and the storm they raised sent ripples and eddies all the way across the Pasific to lap at the shores of the Philippines.

BUT WHILE no stable government existed to undertake a long-range program of planned reform, it is nevertheless true that a number of partial reforms were undertaken, motivated not only by a growing concern lest Filipinos go the way of the Spanish-American people, but also by a sincere desire to extend even to the poor **indio** some of the blessings of liberalism.

The opening of Manila to foreign trade in 1834 has already been mentioned. Between 1855 and 1877 foreign vessels were also admitted to a number of provincial ports. In 1851 the Banco Español-Filipino was established by the government in response to the needs of Manila's growing commerce.

Until the 1860's the only system of public education in the Philippines was that established and maintained by the Church. Every settled parish and many of the mission stations had a school for boys and girls in which, besides the catechism, the elements of reading, writ-

ing, arithmetic and music were taught.

Doubtless some of these parish schools were of the type satirized by Rizal in his **Noli me tangere**; but it is quite unfair to judge the system as a whole on the basis of a chapter in a work of fiction. Recent researches such as those of Father Fox have shown that these schools were on the whole much better run, and the instruction given in them much more effective, than is generally believed.

The medium of instruction used was usually the language of the region in which the school was situated. Every now and again, as far back as the seventeenth century, colonial officials would agitate for the use of Spanish instead of the native languages, and when nothing happened, would accuse the parish clergy of sheer obstructionism. That some of the religious parish priests opposed the teaching of Spanish to Filipinos was undoubtedly true.

In the nineteenth century especially it was feared that a widespread knowledge of Spanish would merely serve as a vehicle for ideas unsettling to the religious faith of a simple people and to the hitherto unquestioning allegiance which they gave to Spain. The fear was not entirely unfounded, as subsequent events proved.

However, this was not the principal difficulty. There were many competent educators among the clergy who were thoroughly in favor of making Spanish the medium of instruction. The principal difficulty was the lack of trained teachers and of funds to expand the school system beyond the primary level. The passage of the educational laws of 1863 and the establishment of a normal school under Jesuit direction two years later represent a serious effort to meet the difficulty.

UNFORTUNATELY, administrative reforms failed to keep pace with economic and social progress. It may well be argued whether they could have done so even if conditions in the Peninsula had been less troubled than they were. In a certain sense all colonial regimes are self-liquidating, and the Spanish colonial system was no exception to this rule. Colonization, where it is not merely a process of ruthless exploitation, is an educative process; sooner or later the point is reached where the subject peoples achieve a degree of self-conscious maturity which makes them resentful of their bonds and avid for freedom and the responsibilities that go with it.

As early as 1843 a perceptive observer, Sinibaldo de Mas, set up the terms of the problem for the ministers of Isabella II to consider. He said, in effect,

that given the stage of development which the Philippines had reached, a policy of salutary neglect was no longer possible.

Spain now had to choose one of two courses. If she meant to retain the Philippines permanently, then she had to arrest all changes tending to the further political and cultural improvement of the Filipinos. All schools save the most elementary should be abolished, the islands sealed off from all contact with the outside world, and a colonial administration instituted which, while completely just, should also be completely autocratic.

If on the other hand Spain meant at some future time to grant the Filipinos their freedom, then she should adopt a policy directly contrary to this. Filipinos should be educated to the full extent of their abilities, all obstacles to the free exchange of ideas should be removed, and the people should be prepared for eventual self-rule by a gradually increasing participation in government.

It does not appear that Isabella's ministers or the parliamentary cabinets which succeeded them gave much attention to Mas' dilemma. Opportunities continued to be given to Filipinos to improve themselves, but never quite enough to satisfy them; they continued to be kept in subjection, but the subjection was never so complete as to preclude all hope of its being done away with altogether.

By the end of the century even the most moderate reformers were beginning to think that nothing but a clean sweep would put things to rights. Ibarra was getting ready to join Elias.

THE DEPORTEES of 1872 and those of subsequent proscriptions were joined in Europe by a number of student patriots who believed, somewhat naively, that extensive political and social reforms could be achieved within the framework of the existing colonial system. It is doubtful whether their propaganda made much of an impression on Madrid; but the enthusiasm which they aroused at home cannot be overestimated. Nor was it only the educated upper class to which they belonged that followed their activities with hope and anxiety. Even the common people regarded them with a devotion akin to worship; for if many of the propagandists' ideas were beyond their comprehension they could understand this much, that here at least were men of their own race who could deal with the Spaniard on equal terms.

The Spanish government rejected the proposals of these moderate nationalists and dramatized its refusal by the exe-

cution for sedition of their most eloquent and respected spokesman, Jose Rizal. As was to be expected, the leadership of the national movement thereupon possed on to more radical hands, to Andres Bonifacio and the Katipunan; and the attempt to nip sedition in the bud merely enlarged it into a revolution.

The narrow compass of this paper precludes even a summary treatment of the Revolution. But this is no great loss; there is no period in Philippine history that has received such detailed treatment. So much so that we have tended to neglect the antecedents which led to it, and so run the risk of failing to grasp the essence of a movement with whose details we are so familiar.

It is for this reason that I have preferred to devote this slight essay not to the climax of the story, but to those initial complications which alone make that climax understandable, both in its glory and its tragedy. — *1957 Progress.*

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The Need to Work

SOUTHEAST Asia needs "a wholesale revolution in the attitude of men toward work" before it can supply the skilled laborers needed for modern industrial production. This is the opinion of scholars from 12 countries quoted in a recent report published under the auspices of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization.

The scholars from Japan, Britain, the Philippines, Thailand, New Zealand, Pakistan, the United States, India, France, South Viet Nam, Canada and Borneo met in Bangkok, Thailand, early this year to study the question of how fast the southeast Asian nations can transform centuries-old agricultural economies into modern technological societies.

"Scientific and technological progress," the scholars concluded, "has little prospect of being applied at short notice, on a large scale, in most of these countries."

In measuring the impact of Western technology on southeast Asia, the scholars found some disturbing aspects. Industrialization, they said, has destroyed courtesy in the Philippines, cheapened art in Thailand and weakened family ties all over Asia. None of them, however, suggested that the programs of industrialization in these nations be stopped.

"No nation can keep out of the way of technological progress," they stated in their report. "The process of industrialization and automation is irreversible."

The scholars agreed that southeast Asia needs progress, and that the alternatives are stagnation and back-sliding.