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MABINI: ARCHITECT OF THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

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All revolutions, as movements affirming the worth of the individual and attempting to re-define social relations, have had their protagonists. These are the men who either participated intimately in the determination of the direction of the movement or who, in retrospect, analyzed the revolutionary events in terms of theoretical principles, making the Revolution a fact of significance and assuring it a proper position within the perspective of the history of a nation.

It was Mabini's distinct character that he played this double role in the Philippine Revolution, more specifically in its second phase. His first role refers to his activities as adviser to Aguinaldo in June 1898, and then as prime minister in the first

Philippine Republic from January 1899 to May of the same year. As author of the electoral and other organic laws of the Revolutionary government, he was responsible for formulating the postulates by which the authority of a new-born state came into operation. Determining the broad outlines of foreign policy from June 1898 to May 1899, he saw to it that the recognition of independence should not suffer any amendment. All of these mean, in effect, that Mabini played a major and vital role in determining the route the Revolution was to take. It was a direction from which the revolutionary leaders could not deviate without abandoning the primal principles which fed the initial vigorous step of the Revolution. These were the princi-

ples of national independence and for the construction of a new social order in consonance with "justice and reason," where social disharmonies were absent.

Filipino historians have adequately described Mabini's participation in the momentous events of our history. Consequently, an emphasis on his other role is in order. This is his position as a Filipino political philosopher *par excellence*. Applying categories, properly belonging to the philosophy of history, to the events of the Revolution when the success of American arms became patent to all, he reflected on its rationale, gains, losses, and the eventual unfolding of its implications. Thus, as it were, the events of the Revolution began to be coordinated into an intelligible system, and the Revolution itself could now be viewed as an important phase in the march of the Filipino towards more freedom.

As a political philosopher reflecting on the Philippine Revolution, Mabini's description as to what the revolution actually consisted of must be distinguished, from

what he prescribed the revolution ought to have been. He believed that when a people were consistently denied participation in the high offices of a government, when their aspirations for better education and an increase of civil rights were shamelessly disregarded, and when they begin to believe that the government was biased in favor of a special segment of society, a deep resentment among the people would result. This situation together with circumstances such as a weakening of the government and a general disobedience to the laws would inevitably develop into a revolution. A revolution is thus described as "the violent means utilized by a people . . . to destroy a duly constituted authority, substituting for it another more in consonance with reason and justice." And to establish a connection between positive law and the abstract conception of justice, Mabini leaned heavily on natural law as a corrective or model for human law. Adhering to the excellence of the mind as a value, Mabini hoped that the exercise of reason

would lead men to discover solutions for the settlement of differences, formalize standards of justice, and lay down the foundations for what was believed to constitute the common and good life.

Clearly, it is problematical as to how much reason can serve to diminish social conflicts, but it can be conversely asserted that it is rather the dissolution of social inequalities that might precisely make men think or reason better. However, it must be pointed out that Mabini was essentially a product of European rationalism and early nineteenth century liberalism, ideologies that maintained the almost infinite capacity of the mind to better things not only in the scientific field but also in the ethical and political sphere.

These influences on Mabini led him to assert that the desire for a revolution in the Philippines was derivative from the natural impulses, found among all men, toward progress. Or rather, when these impulses were being stifled by bad government revolution becomes a necessity. To quote:

"The tendency for betterment

or progress is a necessity or law found in all beings, whether individually or collectively. Thus a political revolution, which is generally intended by a people to better their conditions, becomes an irresistible necessity . . . A people that has not yet arrived at the fulness of life must grow and develop, otherwise, its life would be paralyzed—which means its death. As it is unnatural that a being should resign itself to its own death, the people must employ all its energies in order that a government that impedes its progressive development be destroyed."

Mabini's intense faith in the desire and ability of the Filipinos to better their lives and contribute to the general progress and culture of the world, as well as his belief that it was natural for a people to do away with the impediments stifling the impulses toward progress, led him not only to justify the Philippine Revolution but also to assert that it was both irresistible and inevitable. Mabini revolted from the notion that the Filipinos were doomed indefinitely to brutalization and colonial and ecclesiastical oppression.

However, to bring about a successful termination to the Revolution, it was further

believed that the Filipinos had to be united into a single will aiming at the good of all. And once this will was directed to organizing the collective life along national lines, it would ultimately prevail over the military forces either of Spain or that of the United States. It was hoped that this will was, at bottom, one that reflected love of neighbor and country and could consequently thrust to the background all petty, narrow and sectarian jealousies. Consequently, a movement that was initiated to serve the interests of a special class in society, nullified in effect the existence of such a will, and did not deserve the name of "revolution." To quote:

All agitations fostered by a special class in order that its particular interests be benefited, do not deserve the name [of revolution].

Conversely, Mabini maintained that genuine revolutions were essentially popular movements. Here, his democratic temperament is evident. Consequently, a problem that presented itself was how social power could be organized such that the most numerous class, that is,

the poor, would not be taken advantage of by special groups in society. However, it is in vain that we look for a radical economic program by Mabini!

It was Mabini's basic democratic temper that also led him to consider the revolution against the United States unjustified the moment the majority of the people desired peace. And he justified this action of the people by appealing to the law of self-preservation which dictated prudence in pursuing the revolutionary movement the moment superior forces not only threatened additional misery and desolation but actually endangered the very life of society itself. Thus, Mabini counselled that the violent and coercive means to attain independence should be transformed into peaceful agitation. This was still, in any case, a manifestation of the impulse for progress. Yet Mabini feared that the revolutionary fervor might decline with piecemeal political concessions granted by the Americans. Consequently, he insisted that the revolution, as armed uprising, was simply a tech-

nique to bring about the recognition of individual rights and also independence as the prerequisite to an expansive life and ordered society. And as long as independence was possible by peaceful means, all energies ought to be utilized to attain it by such means. Once devoid of political power to pursue his ideas, Mabini contented himself with reminding his compatriots of the ideals of the Revolution and invited them to search into their hearts to discover if it were not really

independence that they wanted.

Mabini was a supreme example of a man willing to sacrifice personal interest for what he conceived to be the general interest of all. Emancipating himself from the narrow interests that plague an ordinary man, he was able to exercise, to use Rousseau's term, the general will, a will not necessarily that of the people, but a will for the good of all the people. Mabini's legacy is for all patriots and free men.

THOSE THREE BIG WORDS

It is quite true, of course, that liberty, equality and fraternity are more frequently upon the lips of men who are bent on destroying them, the true believers keeping them more silently at heart. But the lip service and the betrayals exist because some men are exploiters and others are exploited, because the groups are in conflict, and because the conflict can be resolved only by the end of exploitation itself. But the end of exploitation would be the beginning of actual brotherhood, the end of unequal powers would be the beginning of equality, and the end of extreme privilege for a few would be the beginning of genuine liberty for all.