

# From Cádiz to La Liga: The Spanish Context of Rizal's Political Thought

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## Abstract

José Rizal wrote his major works in the 1880s but the prevailing view in Rizal scholarship today is that philosophically, his worldview was firmly rooted in the French Enlightenment; how then could the theories of the preceding century serve him in confronting the issues of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so radically different from those that brought an end to the *ancien régime* everywhere? Most commentators say his limited exposure to 19<sup>th</sup>-century political economy—evidenced by the absence in his library of the major works of the period, coupled with the limitations of his class, being of the *ilustrado* elite and distant from the toiling masses—prevented him from understanding fully the contradictions of his time; hence his politics of reformism and his rejection of revolutionary practice. Taking a contrary stance, this essay seeks to understand Rizal's political thought in relation to the great political struggles of Spain, from the 1812 Cádiz Constitution of the original *ilustrados*, through the 1868 Glorious Revolution of the liberals, down to the aborted Spanish Republic of 1873/74 of the republicans, foremost of whom was the socialist-republican Francesc Pi y Margall, Rizal's intellectual mentor, political ally, and personal friend. A reading of Rizal's major essays in the context of Spain's constitutional struggles—the politics of transformation versus the politics of conservatism—and the revolutionary vision of Pi y Margall reveals the logic of his emancipatory discourse and displays the groundings of his political economic program of La Liga Filipina firmly in early 19<sup>th</sup>-century mutualist traditions of the European Left.

Key words: Rizal, spanish political thought, Cadiz constitution, Pi y Margall, La Liga Filipina

A POST-REVOLUTIONARY PHILIPPINES, having at long last liberated herself from a Spain oblivious to her demand for reforms, would most likely choose for its government “a federal republic,” hypothesizes José Rizal in *Filipinas dentro de cien años* (The Philippines a Century Hence), the “freest of governments” (Rizal 1889–1890, 161).<sup>1</sup> Years later, this stated political preference would be cited by American scholars, in their re-engineering of Rizal to serve the purposes of the new colonial order, as an endorsement of the American form of government. What Rizal expressed, however, was a *prise de position* within a historically specific ideological conflict. His ideas had nothing to do with the United States’ federal republic and had everything to do with the political struggles in Spain in which his struggle for national emancipation was fully imbricated.

To be precise, *República federal* (Federal republic) was the goal of a political movement in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that, like all the other liberal currents in Spain, had its source in the Cádiz Constitution of 1812. Spearheading the movement of *Republicanism federal* (Federal republicanism) through the convulsions of Spanish politics was a man unequalled in intellectual depth, moral rigor, and revolutionary fervor: Francesc Pi y Margall. Spain’s outstanding statesman and political theoretician of his epoch, and one-time head of the Spanish Government, he was also the political mentor and personal friend of Rizal.

A prolific writer on subjects ranging from art history to finance economics, Hegelian in philosophy and Proudhonian in political economy, Pi y Margall (1824 – 1900) was preeminently a constitutionalist. As such, he waged a lifetime crusade for a fundamental transformation of Spain through constitutional change, a quest that has been aptly called *constitucionalismo revolucionario* (Jutglar 1970; Hennesy 1962; Bernaus 1966). A new *design* of the system of governance was called for, one that would make possible revolutionary change in society. He saw Spain’s constitutional history as the collective effort of each generation to grapple with the problems of the day, and saw certain inevitability in the process of change that moved in the direction of freedom. The opening lines of

one of his major works, *La reacción y la revolución* (Reaction and Revolution), states this Hegelian premise forcefully.

Facts, says a German philosopher, are nothing else but the realization of ideas, and these in turn are but the evolution of an ever-generating and eternal Idea, whose development is that of beings in space, of events in time, of Spirit in the midst of the human species. Man's reason, adds the philosopher, can elevate itself to an understanding of this idea; but only by searching for it through reality, that is to say, through Nature and History. Allow me then, [...] to start with what has already been realized, the latest developments (Pi y Margall [1854] 1982, 67).

The latest developments referred to the immediately preceding revolutionary events in 1854, which landed him a brief stint in jail as an agitator at the barricades of Madrid; but the relevant historical context for his discourse on “la revolución forzosa, ineludible y permanente” (Pi y Margall [1854] 1982; the inexorable, inevitable, and permanent revolution) is the dialectical process of constitutional change that began in Cádiz in 1812 and led to subsequent uprisings, which were but ripples preceding the big wave that would surely come. The conflicts of the day—of the century—arise from resistance to change by the entrenched order, he asserts, and peace will come only at the end of struggle. Then shall Spain redo herself entirely. “Nuestra revolución no es puramente política; es social” (ibid.; Our revolution is not purely political; it is social).

Spain's constitutional history is also the relevant context within which one can more fully comprehend Rizal's conceptualization of the movement for national emancipation which he came to lead. A re-reading of his works in light of Spain's constitutional conflicts through the century reveals the Spanish sources of his political ideas, running from the original *ilustrados* (literally, the enlightened) of the Spanish Enlightenment who constituted the Cortes de Cádiz (1808), through the Glorious Revolution of 1868, to the aborted Republic and socialist-oriented program of Pi y Margall (1873).

These stimuli to strategic political thinking initially translated into a recasting of Rizal's reading of Philippine history in terms of the long-established juridical principles and political traditions of Spain that were the veritable sources of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812. Rizal turned around the arguments of Spanish colonial masters and took Spain to task in terms of her own principles and traditions. This critique culminated in the drafting of the organizational structure and developmental program of his own *La Liga Filipina*. It was the means he proposed so that a viable nation could emerge and take her stand among others, imbued with selfhood, autonomous, responsive to the needs of her people, and open to the future. With the sources of Rizal's political thought thus traced in a world-historical context, key concepts of La Liga can be more fully comprehended as pertaining to a tradition within the European Left, an ideological affinity barely discussed in the corpus of Rizal scholarship.<sup>2</sup>

### **The Sources of the Constitution of 1812**

The world, not least the Spaniards themselves, was incredulous that a constitution so advanced in her principles, intentions, and substance could suddenly arise out of an absolutism so pervasive as that of inquisitorial Spain at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was dismissed by the returning monarch Fernando VII from the moment he had no further political use of it, seeing it as an invention of Jacobinism and entirely foreign to the Spanish soul; historians since then have tended to take this view that "*La Pepa*"—as it was popularly known—was an import, like so many other modern institutions, from revolutionary France. Others, equally critical, regarded it as a throwback to medieval times, when royal authority was held in check by the feudal privileges—the *fueros*—of the nobles; this view was held most notably by clerics, who had early on thrown in their lot with monarchical absolutism.

Karl Marx, like many others, was deeply impressed by the enigma of the sudden appearance *and* disappearance of this "curious phenomenon" under "circumstances ... without parallel in history," and

gives his view, “The truth is that the Constitution of 1812 is a reproduction of the ancient *fueros*, but read in the light of the French Revolution, and adapted to the wants of modern society.” He concludes that

on a closer analysis, then, of the Constitution of 1812, we arrive at the conclusion that, so far from being a servile copy of the French Constitution of 1791, it was a genuine and original offspring of Spanish intellectual life, regenerating the ancient and national institutions, introducing the measures of reform loudly demanded by the most celebrated authors and statesmen of the eighteenth century, making inevitable concessions to popular prejudice (Marx 1854, Chapter VI).

What were those ancient and national institutions that found their way into the Cortes of Cádiz? Or, to answer in reverse, what were the sources of the fundamental principles of the Constitution of 1812?

It could not have been stated more forcefully: sovereignty resides in the nation, not in the King. The King rules as the executive power but this authority now emanates from the people, not from his person and not by divine right. To the sovereign people belongs exclusively the right to establish fundamental laws through the instrumentality of the Cortes, the assembly of deputies representing the nation, and elected by universal male suffrage. With legislative power vested in the Cortes and judicial power in tribunals independent of the king and Cortes, a separation of powers is effectively established. The King swears to obey the Constitution and to respect the civil liberty of the nation and the rights of every individual, and all contrary acts committed by him are null and void. This limitation of royal power is the most striking feature of the Cádiz Constitution and carries an ominous sanction: “If this I do [obey the Constitution], may God reward and protect me; if not, may it be at my own peril” (Villa 1997; *The Political Constitution*, Article 173).

Fernando VII found this right of insurrection at the heart of the Cádiz Constitution particularly repulsive; he saw it as an intrusion into the divinely ordained Spanish order, one that came from the infernal world

of the Jacobins who only recently had killed the French king, Fernando's cousin. But in truth, this is the same right as the *Privilegio de la unión* (privilege of the union) that can be found in the ancient *fueros*, or privileges, of Aragon. From their legendary beginnings, the *fueros* stood for centuries on the principle of the rule of law and the precedence of the law to the king; by oath, the king must accept the *fueros* in order to govern—if *not, not* (Giesey 1968). Similar principles of law can be found in the ancient Constitution of Castile, as well as in the Kingdom of Navarre, where a judge or select group (*Justicia*) stood between nobles and king with the task to watch over the strict observance of the laws by the king. The king's oath in the 1812 Constitution stems from this tradition, just as the Permanent Committee of the Cortes, which was created to watch over the strict observance of the Constitution during the prorogation of the Cortes, was a modern version of *Justicia*. Meanwhile, the State Council, whose members were chosen from nominees of the Cortes, was a revival of the privy royal council.

The *cortes* themselves emerged in the Middle Ages as an eminently feudal institution, a “corte” being an advisory council made up of the most powerful nobles closest to the king. Arguably, the Cortes of the Kingdom of León, dating from 1188, could claim to be the first parliamentary body in Europe. With the appearance of cities and the emergence of a merchant class—*burguesía*, from *burgo*, city—who made their fortune there, membership in the Cortes began to include representatives of the cities as well, who thus formed the third “estate” in the heretofore exclusive domain of nobles and prelates. The economic demands of the Reconquista made the financial resources of the cities indispensable, compelling the king to concede *fueros*—grants of autonomy—to the cities, which effectively gave them a measure of veto power over him (Braudel 1976).

The union of the kingdoms of Aragon, Castile, and Granada under the Catholic Kings upheld these ancient institutions of *fueros* and veritably became a feudal monarchy, resting on the twin pillars of Spanish liberty: the Cortes at the courtly level and, throughout the Union, the

*ayuntamientos*, municipal self-government with corresponding privileges dating from Roman times.<sup>3</sup> It was this feudal monarchy that the grandson of the Catholic Kings, Carlos I (Emperor Charles V of the Habsburgs), turned into an absolute monarchy by force of arms to get his way in all matters of government.

This provoked the Revolt of the Comuneros (1520), which was, at bottom, the defense of the liberties of medieval Spain against the encroachments of modern absolutism. The defeat to the first of the Habsburgs resulted in the loss of influence of the cities as the third estate in the Cortes; nobles who declined to finance Carlos' foreign wars also saw their influence in the Cortes decline. Spain thus fell into the hands of absolutism, culminating in that most incompetent of monarchs at the time of Spain's greatest national ordeal: the occupation of the realm by Napoleon. The Cortes of Cádiz, and the constitution they crafted, was the response of Spain's *ilustrados* to seize the reins of power in the name of the nation, for the survival of the nation (Crow 1985, 243). To move beyond an antiquated, dysfunctional absolutism towards modern constitutional monarchy, they went back to the ancient roots of the kingdom.

The Cádiz Constitution declares that the Spanish nation is the collectivity of all Spaniards of both hemispheres—the Spanish homeland in Europe and the Spanish dominions overseas. *Españoles* are all free men born and settled in the Spanish dominions and as such have the right to be represented in the Cortes by deputies chosen by their electors. For all indigenous peoples *ultramar* (overseas), political rights are guaranteed, just as they are for Spaniards in Spain. Thus, both Spaniards and indigenous peoples are transformed from subjects of an absolute monarch to citizens of a nation founded on the doctrine that sovereignty resides in them and all state authority emanates from them.

This was a great conceptual leap, not just in the transformation of subject into citizen (this had been enshrined in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen by the French) but even more so in the recognition that colonizer and colonized had equal rights guaranteed by

the Constitution. This reinstates the principle of the equality of the races which, modern-sounding as it might be, is a juridical doctrine stemming from natural law; it received classic formulation in the writings of Spanish jurists of the Renaissance following the navigational discoveries of the epoch.

Antonio Pigafetta, Magellan's Italian chronicler, observed at their various landings around the world that the indigenous islanders they encountered were *uomini di ragione* (rational people). This observation flows in the tradition of the fundamental premise of the School of Salamanca, Renaissance Spain's great contribution to the development of international law, whose founder, the Dominican theologian Franciscus de Vitoria (1492–1546), exercised considerable influence in his time and beyond. Vitoria conceived of a “republic of the whole world” (*res publica totius orbis*), affirming that mankind all over the world had the same rational capacity to direct their lives, establish their customs, and organize their own communities possessed with their own form of rulership. “Mankind” had just then been discovered to include a whole new world with cultures and civilizations of great diversity and of shocking dissimilarity to the old one, and Vitoria had to work out the legal implications of this discovery.

*De Indis Noviter Inventis* (1532), his treatise on “the Indians recently discovered,” resulted in the invention of a radically new system of international law that sought to apply the same secular principles (*jus gentium*, the law of nations) validly across the races of man. Empirically, the races recently discovered are rational. Axiomatically, all rational beings possess *dominium*, the right of ownership of a thing and all the dispositive rights thereto. And since all dominium comes from God alone, this right rests on natural law that no pope can apportion to others at will and no alien secular power can ignore.

Possessed with volition and dominium and engaged in mutual relations with others, the peoples of the New World are equally bound and protected by *jus gentium*. The dissimilar Spanish and Indian cultures



thus coexist as equals in a common framework—a system of international law—whose juridical principles and rules of conduct in mutual relations must be self-evident to one and all. The doctrinal groundwork has been laid for the ilustrados of Cádiz to declare three centuries later that all free peoples born and bred in the Spanish dominions have equal rights as citizens, including, most significantly, the right to make laws in a representative government.

Elaborating further Vitoria's doctrines on *jus gentium*, another jurist, Francisco Suárez, SJ (1548–1617), expounded in *Tractatus de legibus ac Deo Legislatore* (On the Laws and God the Lawgiver) the issues of sovereignty of nations and the nature of state authority. Human beings everywhere, being rational and living in organized collectivities (*comunitas*), are manifestly endowed with a natural social nature by the one and only true God, who is supreme over all. This social nature includes the potential to make laws for themselves. Axiomatically, all legislative power is derived from God and the authority of every law resolves itself into His, but the politics of peoples are made by men and therefore the governing authority thereof is not of divine but of human origin. People themselves exercise their rights freely and rationally provide mutual assistance to create their own political community. Authority comes into being with the creation of the community, but sovereignty resides in the people who entrust their natural legislative potential to the ruler. What is freely given with expected outcomes can be taken back if expectations are betrayed; ergo, the ruled have the right to disobey and to rebel. In the language of La Pepa, the king who acts contrary to the Constitution is warned to “be on [his] own peril” (The Political Constitution, Article 173).<sup>4</sup>

Where one political community is dominated by another, the same duty of the ruler to safeguard and promote the rights of the ruled arises. Supranational unity is the source of *jus gentium*, which is a positive law, customary and consensual in nature, acknowledged by reason, and accepted by all peoples as the basis for their mutual relations. In conferring citizenship to the indigenous peoples of the overseas dominions, with

right to representation in the Cortes, the Cádiz Constitution restates the doctrines of the School of Salamanca as inherent to the fundamental law of the land.

The Cádiz Constitution decrees that the nation is obliged to protect the liberty, property, and all other legitimate rights of every individual. The king's oath includes swearing to "respect private property and, above all, the civil liberty of the nation and rights of every individual." Amongst the powers and duties of the Cortes are to promote and encourage industry of all kinds and to remove obstacles which may stand in their way; to establish a general plan of public education throughout the whole monarchy; to approve the regulations for the general health; to provide police security of the kingdom; and to protect the political liberty of the press.

These provisions cover those reform measures systematically demanded by the ilustrados of the preceding half-century to transform Spain into a modern, efficient, and enlightened monarchy. The ministers of Carlos III, the enlightened monarch, had gone far in arguing for organic changes in civil society; they had written treatises on the need for public education as the key to national development under the supervision of the State and in line with *la filosofía moderna*; and had attacked exclusive, prohibitive, and privative feudal privileges and seigniorial jurisdictions which continued to hamper the growth of what they called "the new economy," which was based on private enterprise.

They designed and carried out administrative reforms both in the peninsula and overseas; and, being the master-planners and part of the royal council, the ministers established, where they could in Spain and overseas, the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País (Economic Society of the Friends of the Country) as centers of reflection, social critique, and scientific research for the development of agriculture, commerce, and industry. They clashed with the Church on all fronts. The Church owned 16.5% percent of all lands in the peninsula despite just comprising 1.5% of the population; the nobility, 51.5%. Two-thirds of all Spain was owned by only 5% of the population (Maurin 1966).

The most eminent of the ilustrados, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, had proposed an agrarian reform programme that would allow the peasant class access to the extensive aristocratic and ecclesiastical latifundia by lease or purchase and to produce therein as demanded by the market (Carill 1993, 741–56). Equally revolutionary demands were the call for public education nationwide under the authority of the Government and not of the Church, and for the abolition of the Inquisition as a precondition for the freedom of political expression. The only concession to the Church—what Marx, in his *Revolutionary Spain*, meant by “inevitable concessions to popular prejudice” (Marx 1854, Chapter VI)—was for the Constitution to declare Catholicism as the only religion of Spain.

### **Rizal's Reconstruction of Morga's *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas***

Rizal took it upon himself to present “to the Filipinos” the past of “our native land” by “invok[ing] the testimony of an illustrious Spaniard who governed the destinies of the Philippines in the beginning of her new era and witnessed the last moments of our ancient nationality” (Rizal [1890] 2011, xlvii). He values such testimony because “it is the shadow of the civilization of our ancestors which the author is now evoking before you” (vii). The author was Antonio de Morga (1559–1636), Lieutenant Governor-General and Captain General and later *oidor* or judge of the *Audiencia*, the highest appellate court. A decade younger than Suárez, he too studied canon law and civil law at the University of Salamanca and could well have had the Jesuit jurist as his teacher. The book is *Sucesos de la Islas Filipinas* (Events of the Philippine Islands), Morga's account of the Philippines from “their gentility and after the Spaniards had conquered them” up to his departure for Mexico in 1603.

Addressing his countrymen in the preface, Rizal thought that the book would be useful first of all “to awaken your consciousness of our past, already effaced from your memory, and to rectify what has been falsified and slandered” (xlvii). What he does not say is that in effect these are two books in one—Morga's integral text, unassailable in its loyalty to

Church and Crown, and his own (Rizal's) copious annotations running as footnotes throughout the text, commenting, correcting, commending, and debating points of fact and interpretation. Employing the methods of German historiography to arrive at the most rigorous scholarship possible and making full use of the British Museum to cross-reference all other books he could find on the history of the Islands, he constantly had in mind his Spanish readers to whom he would turn the annotated book as a challenge to Spain's own constitutional history.

Rizal starts off by ridiculing the partition of the world made by Pope Alexander VI to the Kings of Castile and Portugal via a demarcation line drawn across the globe. According to this treaty, Filipinas should have gone to the Portuguese, but thanks to Magellan's getting it wrong and thus transferring to Charles V his offer to explore the Moluccas, the islands didn't fall into the wrong hands. However, the papal bull itself was wrong to begin with because it did not recognize the right of *primi occupantis*. Having done so could have avoided "fratricidal struggles" (3n7) ("dragging the islanders along"[3n7]) amongst the early Spanish and Portuguese explorers as to who owned what. A pointless exercise it has turned out, since Protestant nations now possess India and the Moluccas in total disregard of the bull. The School of Salamanca argued that war was justified if the motive was for the good of the natives, for the historical realization of their ontological potential, or for turning them into Christians. Rizal affirms flatly that in all the Spanish incursions into neighboring countries out of Manila, at great cost of lives and resources, the motivation was greed and the ambition to dominate (3n7)—and nothing at all to do with the spread of Christianity (75n54).<sup>5</sup>

Morga recounts the history of colonization begun by Miguel López de Legazpi and the first settlement on Cebu where he "established the City of the Most Holy Name of Jesus" (12). Rizal adds that Legazpi "founded it with all the rights and privileges of the Spanish cities and political communities" (12n23). The factual premise is laid for the extension of the *privilegio de la unión* to the settlements established in the Philippine archipelago. Then comes Morga on the city of Manila.

Many changes and novel things have been the result of the arrival of the Spaniards in these Islands, and their pacification and conversion of the people and the change in the system of their Government, as well as what His Majesty has accomplished for their welfare, since the year fifteen hundred and sixty-four, as usually happens in kingdoms and provinces which are made to change their law and rulers. And the first thing that happened to them was that, besides acquiring the name of Philippine Islands which they received from the first day of their conquest, the entire Islands now constitute a new kingdom and domain, which our master, His Majesty Philip II has named the Kingdom of New Castile of which, in view of her Royal privileges, the City of Manila was made its capital (296-297).

The text has deep resonance in Spanish medieval history. The emergence of *España* as a unified kingdom came as a matter of adhesion and accretion, as over the centuries, the Reconquista freed one part of the peninsula after another and Moorish Spain steadily shrank as Christian Spain correspondingly grew. Having existed separately, these had been kingdoms unto themselves, and their eventual union under the Catholic Kings preserved their traditional privileges. The Reconquista expanded into *la Conquista* in the Americas, and the nations that were subjugated there became new kingdoms in turn: Nueva España, Nueva Granada, and now, in Asia, as Rizal highlights, *el Reyno de Nueva Castilla* (The Kingdom of New Castille).

What were these collectivities before? Morga writes that

[t]hroughout these islands, there were neither kings nor lords to rule them in the same manner as in kingdoms and provinces elsewhere. Instead, in every island and province many *principales* were known among the natives, some being more important and outstanding than others, each having their own followers and henchmen, forming barrios and families who obeyed and respected them. Those principal men used to have friendship and relationship with each other, and sometimes even wars and differences with each other (274–275).

Morga describes the *principalia* as based on succession and kinship, with the leaders duty-bound to govern and rule their subjects, and attend to their problems and needs; in exchange, the subjects would render them respect and esteem, and give their support in wars, expeditions, and all other laboring activities needed to sustain collective existence. These recall the premises of Vitoria and Suárez regarding the consistency of such political communities with the precepts of natural law. Morga observes the customs, religious beliefs, routines of daily life, social relations, sexual mores, cultural expressions, etc. as an anthropologist today would, or as a jurist from the School of Salamanca then would, upholding thereby the applicability of its doctrines to the Islanders and the consistency with *jus gentium* of their mutual relations with other communities.

Morga notes that in war and in other matters, any principal who stood out above others acquired more privileges and a greater following, “and he governed other people, even principales themselves, while retaining for himself his own authority over his particular *Barangai* or clan” (276). Rizal Europeanizes the interrelationships to lay down another premise for an argument building up: “They formed a kind of confederation, like the states of the Middle Ages, with their barons, counts, dukes who elected the bravest to lead them or they accepted the authority of the most important of them” (276n104). Morga elaborates on these mutual relations.

Their laws throughout the Islands were along similar lines following the tradition and customs of their ancients in accordance with the unwritten statutes. In some provinces, there were different customs in certain things, although generally speaking, they had uniform usages and procedure through the Islands (278).

Rizal agrees and, after commenting that custom as unwritten law may in fact be more effective than written law for being internalized and stable, suggests further that

this agreement of the laws at bottom and this general uniformity prove that the relations of the islands among themselves were very strong and the bonds of friendship were more common than wars and differences. Perhaps a confederation existed, for we know through the first Spaniards that the ruler of Manila was a generalissimo of the Sultan of Borneo. Moreover there exist other documents of the XII century that attest this (278n111).

What is his point? Bearing in mind the legal and traditional sources of the Cádiz Constitution, Rizal builds his case that this was the *jus gentium* sustained in practice by these pre-Hispanic communities amongst themselves and also with their foreign trading partners. Whilst Legazpi and his successors might think that they were extending Spain's legal principles to govern the new relations established by them with the indigenous inhabitants of the Archipelago, the latter could equally understand this development as the extension of *their* *jus gentium* to the foreigners.

At the heart of the matter is the *pact*. The communities entered into mutual relations with each other with clear expectations of mutual rights and obligations to be respected and preserved; even if they were to elect the strongest to rule over them all, it was still an agreement of one and all. If relations of friendship, symbolized by the traditional blood compacts between chiefs, carried with them a host of expectations of mutual benefits for their respective communities, so did those entered into by a local chief and a foreign captain. This was the famous accord between Legazpi and Sikatuna of Bohol, an agreement formalized precisely by the ritual of a blood compact. Morga notes that in the customary contracts of the natives, each party has to look out for himself that the terms are complied with by the other party; Rizal comments, "So are the contracts of all nations and of all people, and so also is and was the spirit of the contracts of the first Spaniards with the Filipino chiefs and God grant they might have always adhered to the letter of those contracts!" (286n134).

Morga describes the hierarchical structure of the “commonwealth” as consisting of three social stations: *principales*, *timawas* or freemen/plebeians, and slaves (278). Rizal remarks that this structure is the same as can be found in all kingdoms and republics: the ruling class (the head), the productive class (the social body), and at bottom the servant class (whether slaves or not, but workers all the same). He takes it that these class divisions, exploitative as any other vertically structured collectivity, have their consequent class antagonisms, and speculates that because of these social differences, it had been relatively easy for Spaniards to colonize the archipelago. Colonization was done primarily not because of conquest, but more generally because of a people’s pervasive sense of dissatisfaction with their abusive ruling classes and a consequent unwillingness to defend them.

Thanks to [the Filipinos’] social condition and to their number at that time, Spanish rule encountered little resistance and the Filipino chiefs easily lost their independence and liberty. The people, accustomed to bondage, would not defend them against the invader nor would they fight; for the people it was just a change of masters. The nobles, accustomed to tyrannize by force, had to accept foreign tyranny when they found it to be stronger than theirs, and not finding either love or lofty sentiments among the enslaved masses, found themselves without arms and without strength (280n118).<sup>6</sup>

The pressing reality of the “social condition” of the Filipinos of that time should not be any less grievous than the “social question” that class-conscious intellectuals in Rizal’s time grappled with (in addition to the “political question” which referred primarily to the form of government). That all class societies are beleaguered by contradictory class interests is axiomatic to socialism in its broadest acceptance, and as we shall see later in the discussion on Pi y Margall’s influence on Rizal, both men saw clearly that *la cuestión social* (the social issue) was inseparable from *la cuestión política* (the political issue). In *Morga*, Rizal theorizes that rule by the elite is tyrannical in nature, and speculates that with the arrival of superior foreign forces, the people (the masses) made their choice



logically enough. Defend the abusive ruling class whose interest is to perpetuate class exploitation? Why not try out the new masters instead? (Ibid. and Rizal 1889–1890, 137).

The “new masters” that held the hopes high for the Filipinos were personalized in Miguel López de Legazpi, a man of honour and true leadership, and especially his grandson, Juan de Salcedo, “who, through his astuteness, excellent qualities, talents, and personal valor won the sympathy of the Filipinos. He [...] inclined them to peace and amity with the Spaniards. [...] (Rizal [1890] 2011, 12n24). “[H]e is the only one we know who made the Indios of his *encomienda* of Bigan the heirs of the greater part of his estate” (Ibid.). Exemplars like this held great promise. The old political order, proven unsatisfactory, gave way to the new. With this basic narrative structure, Rizal began *Filipinas dentro de cien años*.

The ancient lords, who had sought only to conquer for themselves the fear and submission of their subjects, whom they inured to servitude, fell like leaves from a dried-up tree, and the people, who had no love for them nor knowledge of what liberty was, easily changed masters, hoping perhaps to gain something from the new. Then began a new era for the Filipinos (Rizal 1889–1890, 137).

This accord was not to last for long. Colonialism revealed itself to be utterly other. Upon Legazpi's death, “the Malay Filipinos began little by little to get undeceived and finding the yoke heavy, tried in vain to shake it off” (139). If they had willingly submitted themselves to Spanish rule, they could just as well withdraw from the union now. But this was no longer possible for the people, who were “disillusioned by force of sad experience,” and who “saw everywhere discord and disorder, apathy and brutalization in the lower classes, discouragement and disunion in the upper” (139). The new order destroyed the old. Three centuries passed, “the neck had grown used to the yoke, and each new generation, begotten in chains, adapted itself further each time to the new order of things”(139).

The new order of things is colonial domination, unmitigated though dissimulated. Having given up their freedom, Filipinos have been led to believe ever since that they should be forever grateful for the two great gifts of religion and traditions that lock them in humble devotion and proud fealty to Mother Spain. By Rizal's time, when demands for reform were continuously building up, this had become the dominant discourse: be grateful for what had been generously given to you and do not demand reforms. *La Voz de España* (The Voice of Spain), a Manila newspaper, argues that the only ties that bind the Islands to the Peninsula are religion and tradition; and that no common administration system, no economic progress, no juridical reforms, not even the diffusion of the Spanish language, even less the power of arms, can make these spiritual bonds stronger than they already are (Ibid., 87–88). In short, stop asking for reforms; they will just disrupt the union.

In an explosive essay, *Como se engaña a la patria* (How the Fatherland is Deceived), Rizal turns the tables around and reminds one and all of the fundamental premise of that relationship.

[D]ecir que “los únicos vínculos propiamente sociales que unen a Filipinas con la Península son la religión católica y los respetos tradicionales,” es ofender al acendrado patriotismo y la lealtad de los filipinos, que desde Legazpi se han unido con España, no por razones de religión ni de tradicionalismo, sino, al principio, por las de *la alta conveniencia política*, y después, por amor, por cariño a la madre patria (Rizal 1889, 88; [t]o say that the only proper social ties that unite the Philippines with the Peninsula are the Catholic faith and traditional considerations is to offend the pure patriotism and loyalty of the Filipinos, who, since Legazpi, have united themselves with Spain, not for religious reasons or tradition, but from the beginning for a *political accord of the highest import*, and only then for love, for affection for the Mother Country; italics mine).

The Filipinos since Legazpi's time have united themselves with Spain not for religious reasons nor for tradition, but for a *political accord of the*

*highest import*, the free meeting of the minds on a mutually beneficial political order. The time has come for a fundamental redefinition of the relationship, and this demand shall be made on the basis of rights and contractual obligations *which tie Spain to the Philippines*: Spain must answer to herself.

If not, not. If this is the essence of rule by consent, as enshrined in Spain's constitutional theory, if this is the very same principle which ties Spain and Filipinas to each other, and if after three centuries this is no longer so, then the Filipinos have the right to separate from Spain, by arms if necessary. The thrust of Rizal's argument fell on deaf ears in Spain, but reverberated in the Philippines. This line of thought, asserts Cesar Adib Majul, was absorbed by the *Katipunan* as the rationale for revolution. "It was a daring step for the *Katipunan* to take when it resorted to force in order to recapture those rights believed to have been granted by Nature — when all other means were believed to have been futile. The *Katipunan* in maintaining that Spanish rule in the Philippines was historically based on an original 'Blood Compact,' presented a technique utilized for justifying a revolt against Spain. The justification was that not only did the Spanish government not fulfill the terms of the compact but actually violated it by its tyranny" (Majul 1967, 192).

### **Spain in Rizal's Time: The Perspective of Pi y Margall**

It was a constitutional monarchy that governed Spain when the 21-year-old student Rizal arrived there in 1882. Seven decades had passed since Cádiz 1812, a convoluted period which saw Spain move from one constitutional dispensation to another. There also was one military uprising after another, and the country alternated between liberal-moderate and clerico-monarchical absolutist alliances before experiencing an indecisive Carlist War for monarchical succession. There had been the Glorious Revolution of 1868—the most important of nineteenth-century revolutions (Carr 1980, 1)—that ousted the monarch, reinstated the constitutional principles of Cádiz and, like the 1968 global upheaval with

Paris as its epicenter, reverberated across the world with the exhilaration that freedom was possible *now*. A non-Spanish monarch had been found to rule by the Constitution but he gave up soon enough, finding the Kingdom “ungovernable.”

Thus was a republic suddenly thrust onto stage, *faute de mieux*, besieged in conflict from all sides from start to finish, and it was finished before it could get started by yet another military *pronunciamento*. Constitutional monarchy in the person of the dethroned Queen’s son was reinstalled by *La Restauración*, with a two-party system that took turns in government via parliamentary elections, with the party leaders—Antonio Cánovas del Castillo (1828–1897) and Práxedes Mateo Sagasta (1827–1903)—oscillating in office as head of state. Into this political system stepped the Filipino ilustrados, with their demands for reform, starting with representation in the Cortes, which had been granted as a matter of political right to Filipinos under the Constitution of 1812. It was granted twice but definitively abrogated in 1837.

Within a few months of his arrival in Spain, Rizal met Pi y Margall. Thirty-seven years older, the Catalan statesman had been out of government since 1874 when he resigned from the impossible position of President of the Republic of Spain amidst the total chaos. This experience of heading government and his analysis of the political failure resulted in *La república de 1873* (The 1873 Republic). This was followed by *Las nacionalidades* (The Nationalities) in 1876, where the influence of the German philosophers Hegel and Herder on Margall’s concept of the nation is most apparent. The book also drew on Proudhon’s ideas on federalism. Later on, Pi y Margall also wrote *Las luchas de nuestros días* (The Struggles of our Times), a sustained discourse on philosophical matters of enduring significance, which would be enthusiastically reviewed by Rizal in *La Solidaridad* in 1890.

Years later in exile in Dapitan, Rizal revealed to the Spanish commandant there that he learned a whole lot about what was happening in the Philippines from Pi y Margall from their earliest meetings onwards

(Rizal in Retana 1907).<sup>7</sup> With greater reason, it can be supposed that the student also learned about Spanish political history and contemporary developments from the veteran, whose home in Madrid he frequented. It would therefore be quite significantly from Pi y Margall's influential perspective of Spanish politics that Rizal would plot his own course of action for the emancipation of his people.

As statesman, political theoretician, and founder of the Republican Federal Party, Pi y Margall consistently identified himself as all at once a liberal, socialist, and anarchist. All these ideological positions belong to the *family* of Liberalism, says Pi y Margall. Liberalism is the progenitor of socialism and anarchism, its logical extensions.

“Como idea ¿qué hombre de espíritu recto y libre de preocupaciones puede rechazar el anarquismo? Sin quererlo ni advertirlo, vamos los liberales realizándolo (Pi y Margall quoted in Trias Vejerano 2001, 1; as an idea, what right-thinking man who is free from fear can reject anarchism? Without wanting or taking notice of it, we liberals are on our way to achieving it). Anarchism awaits at the end of the liberal historical trajectory, whether liberals want it or not. Thus he could affirm, “Yo soy anarquista, sábelo, hace muy cerca de medio siglo” (Pi y Margall, 1982, 270–271; I have been anarchist, let it be known, for nearly half a century now). That is, from the time he joined the liberals in the barricades of 1854 and wrote *La reacción y la revolución*, where he asserts, “El trabajo y el capital están ya en abierta y decidida lucha” (Pi y Margall 1982, 270–271; Labor and Capital are now in open and decisive conflict).

Equating liberalism with “democracy,” he asserts the same relationship with socialism.

“La democracia fue la generadora del socialismo, y se comprende fácilmente la causa. Proclamada la emancipación política de las últimas clases del pueblo, no podía menos de surgir la idea de su emancipación social... Salió el socialismo de la democracia, como la consecuencia de su premisa...” (Pi y Margall 1864, quoted in Trias Vejerano 2001, 96; Democracy was the progenitor of socialism, and one easily understands

why. Once the political emancipation of the last of the popular classes has been proclaimed, the idea of their social emancipation cannot but follow suit.....Socialism emerges from democracy as the consequence of its premise). In the beginning is liberalism.

As the political expression of modernity, liberalism has its intellectual origins in the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The word itself, however, came a bit later; it was in the political clashes in the Cortes de Cádiz that the Spanish word “liberal” was first coined. One was *liberal* in contrast to being *conservador*. It was a *prise de position* on the acceptability of political change. Those who benefited from the *ancien régime*—the nobility and the clergy, both estates in support of monarchic absolutism—did all they could to prevent change, while the rising class, the bourgeoisie, did all they could to bring it about. It was understood by all that only through a change in government was any change possible at all. Immanuel Wallerstein sums up liberalism as an advocacy of two new worldviews: that political change was normal and not exceptional and that sovereignty resided in the “people” and not in a sovereign (Wallerstein 1994, 5).

This was exactly what the Constitution of 1812 declared, which drastically cut royal power and, appropriating law-making power for the representatives of the people endowed with civil liberties, was determined to bring about change. The return of Fernando VII to absolute power, as with the restoration of all the other *anciens régimes* elsewhere in Europe following Napoleon’s defeat, could not push back the wave of liberalism in Spain any more than the Restoration could in France and elsewhere; nor could any power prevent it from spreading to the colonies. As it triumphed after setbacks in one country after another through the rest of the century, Liberalism became the legitimating geoculture (Wallerstein 1994, 5) of a historical system that was all along sustained and promoted in its worldwide development by this *Weltanschauung*, capitalism. The political struggles that ensued in so many arenas resulted, in Eric Hobsbawm’s pithy encapsulation, “in the triumph of bourgeois-liberal capitalism” by the time that “long century” came to an end in 1914 (Hobsbawm 1987, 8–9).

The strategic goal of Pi y Margall's political struggles was for Spain to adopt a federal republican form of government, in contrast to the constitutional monarchy that was the intention of the Cádiz Constitution. This was also in contrast to a unitary republican form which would have simply replicated the highly centralized bureaucratic structure imposed by the Bourbons across diverse regions. Federalism, argued Pi y Margall, offered the best guarantees for the effective autonomy of each of the regions – “nations” – comprising Spain, and provided the workable mechanisms to empower all social groups by assuring them of some control of local politics (Pi y Margall [1877] 2009; Berlanga 2004).

Only through a federal republic could Spain address the most urgent matters facing her: the *political question* (autonomy for the nations/regions in a multi-national framework of government, decentralization of the ineffective administrative structure), the *colonial question* (national autonomy within a Spanish republican federal framework, or nationalist separatism; Cuba had just broken into open rebellion against the metropolis and demands for reform were beginning to be heard in Puerto Rico and in distant Philippines), and the *social question* (land reform, amelioration of the living conditions of the working classes, regulation of capital-labour relations, etc.) (ibid.).

In September 1868, a military coup dethroned Isabel II and a Constituent Cortes was elected to draft a new constitution. Pi y Margall returned from self-exile in Paris, was elected *diputado*, and as such sat as one of the framers of the 1869 Constitution. It appeared to be a worthy successor to La Pepa as the framework for a constitutional monarchy (which Pi y Margall naturally opposed, but he was on the losing side in the voting), with representation in the Cortes based on universal male suffrage. It was the first secular constitution of Spain, effecting the separation of Church and State. But it did not recognize the rights to parliamentary representation of the Empire's last three remaining colonies, leaving them instead under *Leyes de Indias* (Laws of the Indies), akin to martial law, which was declared in 1837. All the same, the Revolution of 1868, a triumph of liberalism by

any measure, set into motion a revolution of rising expectations in these far-flung islands.<sup>8</sup>

In Spain, chaos ensued. The Constitution required a king, and they found one, but the unresolved political conflicts of the century came to a head and the national economy went into a spin-dive. In 1873, two years into his throne, Amadeo I abdicated in despair, elections were quickly held, and with huge abstentions by the conservative parties who were in total disarray, the Republicans found themselves in power—but without power. It was their turn to find out, like the hapless monarch before them, that Spain was indeed a country impossible to govern. The most prominent republicans took quick turns at being president, Pi y Margall being the second.

He presented to the Cortes a resolutely transformative program never seen before. The aims included putting into effect the separation of Church and State, enactment of laws to bolster regional autonomy in the Peninsula and *ultramar*, reorganization of the military; establishment of mixed commissions of capital and labor to regulate working conditions and fix the minimum wage, support for the enhancement of labor and capital relations by institutionalizing circuits of negotiation, reduction of the working day to nine hours; regulation of child labor, sale through agrarian reform of uncultivated latifundia and State lands to peasant communities, the promotion of free and obligatory public education, etc. (Trias Vejerano 2001, 116).

The pronounced socialist orientation in this political programme was the singular influence of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1803–1865). In the context of the evolving history of socialism,<sup>9</sup> it was pre-1848 socialism, dominated by the French and with Proudhon as the dominant theoretician, which Pi y Margall imbibed in Paris. He found in Proudhon's socio-economic analysis a powerful key to understanding the economic and political realities of Spain. Capitalism in Spain, he had noted earlier in *La reacción y la revolución*, was weak and highly localized in a few areas, and he thought the social question was less grave in “backward” Spain



with her slow-paced industrialization than in the advanced economies of France and England, "...gracias a nuestro mismo atraso y a lo poco extendido que está la industria manufacturera" (Pi y Margall 1968, 272; thanks to our own backwardness and to the limited growth of our manufacturing industry).

Pi y Margall also translated Proudhon's *Du principe fédératif* into Spanish and found in it a systematically worked-out material basis for his own theory of federalism. More than just a particular structure of government, federalism for Proudhon has its organic place within *civil society*, a system of autonomous local communities and industrial associations which relate to each other by contract and mutuality of interest rather than by laws. In cases of conflict, it takes recourse to arbitration rather than courts of justice. Administration is carried out by workers' management rather than by bureaucracy. The network that emerges from these social building blocks will constitute a natural social unity where government will function organically, not as an authority based on coercion in the Hobbesian sense (of having monopoly of violence) but as an authority based on cooperation. Authority itself, decentralized in mutually bound (voluntarily federated) communes (towns, provinces, regions) and industrial associations (factories, workshops, cooperatives) making autonomous decisions at their respective levels, will eventually dissolve. Authority was rendered unnecessary in the widening recognition of mutual interests of these diverse and pluralistic social units. In a federalist system of government, the State gradually gives way to—dissolves itself in—civil society (Proudhon 1868; Caglaio 2008).

If federalism is Proudhon's answer to the political question (what form of government?), his answer to the social one is "mutualist socialism." *Solution du problème social* (also translated by Pi y Margall) explains the concept: this is a programme of mutual financial cooperation amongst workers aimed at returning the control of the productive process back to themselves. This is to be accomplished by ensuring possession of their own means of production, assisted by reforms of credit and exchange.

“Organization of credit” is vital, Proudhon argues; exploitation would be abolished if associated groups of workers could produce and exchange under conditions of interest-free loans.

Equally crucial is “possession”—the right of a worker or group of workers to control the land or workshop or tools of their trade necessary for production—as the guarantee of freedom. Property as possession of the means of livelihood means freedom; but, in the hands of the landlord or capitalist who thereby exploits the labour of farmhands and workers bereft of their means of production, “property is theft.” Mutualist socialism envisions an egalitarian society of independent peasants and artisans, with factories and utilities run by workers’ associations, which are in turn supported by a system of mutual credit founded on people’s banks. Only federalism as the form of government can make this socio-economic programme possible; hence, the political question and the social question are necessarily one and the same; to settle the political at the sacrifice of the social was unacceptable (Proudhon 1868).

Proudhon had another name for “mutualist socialism.” He called it “anarchism,” and declared himself an anarchist, giving it a new meaning: one who seeks social order without authoritarian government. “As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy.” With the eventual dissolution of authority a natural social order emerges. “Anarchy – the absence of a master, of a sovereign – such is the form of government to which we are everyday approximating” (Proudhon 1840).

In *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle* (The General Idea of Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century), Proudhon situates his concepts of federalism and mutualist socialism within the historical trends of his epoch. He sees in actual developments the inevitable historical progression toward greater liberty and equality, a process he calls “revolution.” This is also the permanent revolution that Pi y Margall sees for Spain with his *constitucionalismo revolucionario*.

What would have been a real transformative revolution in 1873 ended in chaos instead. The unresolved problems broke out in open

conflict; Carlists joined forces with Basque separatists in the north; peasants wrought destruction in the south; workers went on a general strike that brought the economy to a halt; and cantons, declaring themselves autonomous, went into an uprising that swept across the peninsula. Pi y Margall was paralyzed, his socialist program in shambles. Rather than order, as President, the military onslaught against the cantonalist rebels, he resigned.

Looking back years later, and one can imagine the young Rizal intently listening to the elderly statesman who had taken him in, Pi y Margall saw how hopeless it was from the start, because in truth there was no start, “una república que nace muerta” (a republic that was born dead), i.e., stillborn.

### Rizal's La Liga Filipina

It took almost a decade for Pi y Margall to reorganize his *Partido republicano federal pactista* and have his political programme and draft of a new federal constitution approved by the party congress. Never promulgated because the party never had a chance at government, this draft of the Spanish Constitution of 1883 manifests his unique theory of a federal republic; a comparison with the Federal Constitution of 1873 shows the *differentia specifica*.

The Federal Constitution of 1873, also unpromulgated because it was undone by the *coup d'état* before it could be acted upon, begins by listing the sixteen states (*estados*) that comprise the Spanish Nation, including Cuba and Puerto Rico. Filipinas falls under Article 2 —“territories which as they progress may be elevated to States by public authorities”—together with Fernando Poo, Annobón, Corisco, and colonies in Africa.

By contrast, Pi y Margall's constitution of 1883 starts not by defining Spain as a listing of geographical entities comprising the nation nor by affirming the union of “dominions of both hemispheres” as in the Cádiz Constitution, but by recognizing the *volition* of regions to come together of their own accord to compose the Spanish Federation and to work together to achieve their common objectives. Article 1 declares that

La Federación española, constituida por las expresadas regiones, tiene por objeto: asegurar la democracia y la República en todo el territorio federal, mantenerlo íntegro e independiente, defenderlo contra todo ataque exterior, sostener en él la tranquilidad y el orden interiores y aumentar su propio bienestar y su progreso (Constitución Española de 1883; The Spanish Federation, constituted by the manifesting regions, has as objectives: to ensure democracy and the Republic in the entire federal territory, to keep it one and independent, to defend it against all external attack, to safeguard internal peace and order, and promote its own well-being and progress).

In Pi y Margall's theory of federalism, "*expresadas regiones*" refers to regions which have duly promulgated their respective Constitutions as a precondition for the union and have now formally expressed their will to join the Federation. They are not geographical parts of a broader entity nor administrative divisions of a bureaucracy, but are veritable nations entire unto themselves, with their traditions, customs and practices, their socio-economic structures, and natural endowments; with their specific culture and history; and now with the intention (*expresión*) to unite with others to work for common goals.

It is therefore perfectly consistent for Pi y Margall to support the autonomy of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines for their full entry into the Federal Republic if they so desire, or to support their drive for independence if that is the will of their people. In the end, Pi y Margall was alone amidst Spanish politicians in supporting the independence of the last remaining colonies (and, as a logical consequence of his position, in opposing the Spanish-American War).

Rizal was already in Madrid and had come to know Pi y Margall personally when the Catalan was writing up the 1883 Constitution. No doubt Rizal was aware of this constitution and understood fully its philosophy. What would have been clear to him is that, whether or not the Philippines was going to be an autonomous member in the Federation, *it must be a nation first*. Put in the reverse order, the Philippines, having

become a nation, will decide for herself if she wants to join the Spanish Federation as an autonomous region thereof, or alternatively, to become an independent sovereign state. Another option was to be an autonomous region now within the Federation and then separate as an independent state later. Each of these options had several good rationales and required specific political conditions, but however which way, it was her (the Philippines') decision, and hers alone, to make. This choice would have been possible under the 1883 Constitution of Pi y Margall.

But Pi y Margall's constitution was a vision, a hope for the future, perhaps even a chimera in the end; the stark reality of the present was the dominating force of the Constitution of 1876. Making a categorical distinction between *el territorio español* (i.e., the Iberian Peninsula) and *las provincias de ultramar* (overseas provinces), this law declares that Spaniards are persons born in *territorio español* and the child(ren) of a Spanish parent even if born outside Spain. It is only in Article 89 of *Del gobierno de las provincias de ultramar* (On the Governing of Overseas Provinces) that the declaration is made that the overseas provinces of Cuba and Puerto Rico shall be represented in the Cortes as shall be determined by a special law. No mention is made of Filipinas.

It was in this juridical framework that the Filipino ilustrados waged their propaganda movement in Spain to gain parliamentary representation for their country and to work for the much-needed reforms. Their hope was to win the support of a sufficient number of diputados to sponsor bills in the Cortes for these ends. Of the two parties that alternated in power, it was Sagasta's Liberals that would raise the hopes of Filipinos up some notches, but when it was the turn at the next election for Cánovas del Castillo's Conservatives, those hopes would be dashed again. And so it went on and on, hope and desperation taking turns in sync with the *turno* of politics in the *Restauración*.<sup>10</sup>

Rizal posed the Filipinos' demands to Spain as a constitutional—contractual—matter: does she recognize Filipinas as a province to be represented in the Cortes, an integral part of Spain, with all the civil rights

accorded to the Filipino people, as she had done before with the Constitution of Cádiz? By Spain's own constitutional traditions since 1812 and centuries earlier, the Filipinos now pressed their demands as a matter of right. Spain's nonperformance of contractual obligations brought about the colony's decline in the following three centuries. Now she must repair the damage and grant all the reforms that the people are clamoring for. This was the powerful message of *Filipinas dentro de cien años*: Spain has to answer to that obligation. And she must live up to her answer.

Recall Rizal's summation to Carnicero of what their goals were: grant representation in the Cortes to the country; secularize the friars, thus removing their influence over government and country; reform the Administration in all its branches; promote primary education freed from all intervention by the friars; share in halves the country's governmental posts between *peninsulares* and *insulares*; clean up the Administration; and create schools of arts and trades in all provincial capitals with more than 16,000 people (Retana 1907, 274). These reforms were perfectly consistent with the principles and goals of Spain's noblest statesmen from the ilustrados of the Enlightenment to the federalistas of the day.

But those who held the reins of power in Madrid and in Manila were not of this persuasion, so the reformists, after years of hard work and sacrifice, were going nowhere. Listen to two voices of frustration in their letters to Rizal three years apart. In his letter to Rizal, from Madrid on 16 March 1887, Lopez-Jaena writes that

the reason why the government does not want us to have representation in the Cortes is that the friars have intimidated it. In proof of that, Sagasta, Balaguer and Moret have called *diputado* la Guardia, who has initiated it, telling him that they would expel him from the majority if he continued supporting the three bills he has introduced in the Cortes in favor of the Philippines. Sagasta threatened Cañamaque also of expulsion if he carried out his plan to interpellate on Mindanao. The government has begged and requested [Cuban *diputado*] Labra to desist from interpellating on the general policy on the Philippines.

Meanwhile, José Basa in his letter to Rizal from Hongkong on 4 August 1890, writes that with the new ministry in Spain we have gone fifteen years backward.

Then Rizal himself says, in his letter to Marcelo del Pilar from Brussels on 4 April 1890, that

I am assiduously studying what's happening in the country. I believe that nothing can redeem us except our brains: *materialiter vel idealiter sumptum*. [...] Representation will bind the Philippines [to Spain] for a long time. If our compatriots are of a different mind, we should decline representation, but as we are now, with the indifference of our fellow countrymen, it is good enough. At least it's better to have the feet tied than the elbows. What can we do?

But then, he wrote to Mariano Ponce from Brussels on 18 July 1890, saying that

I want to return to the Philippines and though this might be rashness or imprudence, what does it matter? The Filipinos are all too prudent and that is why our country is thus, and it seems to me that we are not getting along well on the path of prudence. I am going to look for another.

People were eager to listen to the famous novelist upon his return to Manila in 1892 on what they could all do under his leadership. Rizal came with his *Estatuto de la Liga Filipina*. We have no record of what he said at those gatherings—though always well-attended, we are told—where he presented his proposal for an organization, so all we have is the publication itself.

The manuscript stands alone; no explanation, theoretical or practical, accompanies the text, no scholarly footnotes, no subsequent essay written. The text must speak for itself.

One is immediately struck by the language. It is austere, even severe, devoid of exhortations of any kind, so unlike Rizal. Solemn and grave, as

organizational statutes generally are, it is bereft of those powerful emotive words that Rizal deploys so effectively in his writings. *Pátria* (country; father land) is mentioned only once—not as that sacred home that stirs the passion of everyone—but simply a concern to be borne in mind, along with one’s family and loved ones, by all members of the Liga, who are entreated to sacrifice personal interest in total obedience to the mandates of their superiors. “*Filipinas*” appears only in the name of the organization itself and disappears in the text as simply “*Archipelago*.” “*Pueblo*”—never absent in all of Rizal’s writings—is this time nowhere; everywhere it is just *afiliados* (members, literally, affiliated) and no credentials are asked of them other than they be morally upright. There is also no mention of “government,” except in relation to a stern stipulation that no dispute between members should ever be taken to judicial or governmental authorities, under pain of severe punishment. “*España*,” in whatever role, as metropolis or colonizer, never mind as “mother-country,” is not to be found. Colonialism is not once mentioned. “State” is absent *tout court*. La Liga Filipina is all about Civil Society.

As statutes of an association, shorn of any historic particularity, this document could well have been written by another person, from another country, of another epoch. Consider France, 1840s, Proudhon. It will be seen that La Liga is at bottom a mutualist association; its goal: to create a compact, vigorous and homogeneous Civil Society.

The basic unit, the building block out of which Civil Society is to be constructed, is the people’s council (*consejo popular*) to be established at the local level all over the country. The councils are to be as numerous as possible and must regenerate themselves continuously. Most of all, they are all integrated within a pyramidal structure of councils from the ground level of *consejo popular* (popular council) through the *consejo provincial* (provincial council) up to the *consejo supremo* (supreme council), which is the highest level and situated at the capital of the Archipelago. Each council functions as a mutualist association where the members (*afiliados*) relate to each other in mutually beneficial ways which are well spelt out in the Statutes. The nature of these interrelationships both within and outside



a particular council and the Liga as a whole is summed up in the last article of the Statute, Article 15 of General Provisions.

“Beyond the confines of the council and in all matters not affecting generally the rule of conduct of la Liga Filipina, all members from the highest supreme chief (*gefè supremo*) to the last member shall in all social dealings regard themselves as brothers in blood; for such fraternal reason are all obliged to defend mutually the interests of all members, to console and comfort them in misfortune; let it be understood that what a member suffers from and endures is also what all the others suffer from and endure” (Ibid.). The last embodies all. The Liga’s motto: *Unus instar Omnium* (One is equal to all.)

The basic economic principle at work in the Liga, as Proudhon advocated in his mutualist socialism, is the *organization of credit*. The associated workers—artisans, peasants, workers, professionals—are enabled to produce and exchange on the basis of loans made available to them by the association itself; with the loans, they can invest in capital goods—their means of production, the tools of their trade—and working capital.

### **THE RIGHTS OF THE MEMBERS OF LA LIGA (*Estatuto, Derechos del A\**)**

1. Every member who fully justifies his need has the right to receive moral, material and pecuniary aid from his council and from the Liga.
2. Every member may demand that business preference be given to him in his trade or profession by all members for so long as he can make the same guarantees as the others. In his travels, whether for the Liga or for his own account, every member can count on assistance from his council or other councils at all levels, for his protection and need for contacts.

3. Every member may invoke the help of La Liga in every want, injury or injustice [This article repeats the second and third goals of the Liga: mutual protection in every want and necessity, and defence against all violence and injustice].
4. Every member may demand capital loan for any enterprise whatsoever, if the council has sufficient and disposable funds.
5. Every member may demand rebate for merchandise or services provided by establishments or professional services supported directly by the Liga.
6. No member may be judged without previously being granted defence.

Note that all the rights of the members of the Liga are economic in nature, designed to promote and facilitate the growth of productive enterprises and professional services through the extension of credit, discount on purchases and services, and other forms of support including protection and defence against injury or injustice. The last includes defence against accusation within the council itself. No mention is made of interest on loans; recall that in the Proudhonian system, credit is interest-free and is based on mutual lending via a people's bank. Liga members are to pay dues—one-time entry and monthly quotas—and are expected to make, as contributions to the council, an undertaking, an idea, a study, or a new applicant for membership. Thus the Liga grows in assets and strengths.

The Statute of La Liga dedicates an entire section, *Inversión de los Fondos*, on the investment of its funds:

1. To support a member or his son who, lacking means, demonstrates application and strong aptitudes for work and study
2. To support an impoverished member in his rights against someone “powerful”

3. To assist a member who has suffered loss
4. To lend capital to a member who needs it for any industrial or agricultural undertaking
5. To promote the introduction into the country of new machinery and industries
6. To open [coop] shops, warehouses and establishments where members can be accommodated more economically than elsewhere
7. The supreme chief has ample authority to dispose of the funds in cases of urgency, so long as accounting is made afterwards in the supreme council.

The investment funds are the means by which Goal 4 of the Liga — “development of education, agriculture and commerce”—is to be achieved. With these funds the Liga functions as a people’s bank or as a development agency directly involved with the members as they strive to develop their businesses. Those impoverished members who demonstrate particularly positive aptitudes for entrepreneurship or study are to be supported financially. The Liga also functions as a social support system, a social net ready to help out a member who has suffered losses, or to protect one who is under some form of oppression by “a powerful one;” given the urgency of such cases, the head of the council is pre-authorized to disburse the necessary funds outside the usual procedures. Defence of the rights of a member from being trampled upon has its corresponding obligation: members should not submit themselves to any humiliation, nor should they treat others with arrogance and disrespect. Cooperative stores and establishments are to be set up where members can obtain goods and services more cheaply than elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Given the rapid advance of science, technology and industry in the western world, the economy is to be modernized by importing advanced technology and introducing new industries financed by the Liga’s investment funds.

Amongst the duties of the members stands out a particular obligation which carries a definite sanction: in all their daily transactions, members

must always give preference to the businesses of the other members; they must not buy from any store other than that of a member, or if one is selling to another member, he or she must do so with rebate. All things being equal, members shall always favour members. Otherwise comes the sanction, “Toda infracción de este artículo será severamente castigada” (Deberes de los A\*, 5; All violations of this rule will be severely punished). This is a matter of discipline and total commitment to the common cause; the mutualist association can function and thrive only if all members dutifully comply with their obligations of reciprocity, mutuality, and cooperation “en todos los actos de la vida” (Estatuto, Deberes de los A\*, 5; literally, “in all life activities”).

Another duty is equally necessary: any member in a position to help but refuses to extend assistance to another in danger or in dire need shall be punished with the same burden that the other has suffered from. Should conflict arise between members, it is for the council itself to resolve their dispute based on the principles of mutualism; members who take their dispute to judicial or governmental authorities instead shall be “severely punished.”

The rest of the duties of the members have to do with the security of La Liga itself. There is an unsaid presumption in Rizal’s statutes that La Liga has to grow and survive in a hostile environment, and must protect itself at all moments. Hence the dictatorial command and communication structure of the organization: top-to-bottom channels of communication; immediate implementation of orders without question; absolute secrecy of everyone on everything; information on a need-to-know basis only; the use of pseudonyms and codes for members and councils; constant and systematic reporting of any signs of trouble; no horizontal sharing of information but bottom-to-top flow only; and readiness to replace any post or part of La Liga which may be rendered disabled for any reason whatsoever (Estatuto, Disposiciones generales).

Emphatically,

“the member must guard in absolute secrecy from all outsiders, even if these may be his parents, brothers, sons, etc. at the cost of his own life, all facts, acts and decisions of his council and of the Liga Filipina in general, this being the means by which the member can attain that which he loves most in life” (Estatuto, Deberes de los A\*, 4).

Here, La Liga appears as a conspiratorial or revolutionary organization, like a Leninist vanguard party or, as it happened subsequently, as the revolutionary organizational structure of Katipunan, inheritor of La Liga. The argument could well be advanced: from the start La Liga *is already designed* to act as a revolutionary party if and when the moment comes: La Liga awaits Ang Katipunan.

So what then was La Liga as conceived by Rizal? Historians have battled each other for decades on their answers. A separatist organization, and therefore Rizal was revolutionary? Or an assimilationist programme, and therefore Rizal was a reformist? Because La Liga aimed at “the study and application of reforms,” was it therefore premised on gradualism and dependent on Spain’s pace in granting those reforms? Was Ang Katipunan a repudiation of La Liga?

Rather than ask what the appropriate label is to attach to La Liga from the outside, and retrospectively, why not ask what La Liga aimed to do from the inside, there and then? The fact is that La Liga aimed to create the Civil Society that still was not there—“to unite the entire Archipelago into one compact, vigorous and homogeneous body” (*Fines*, 1). Majul made a good case of showing that the unification of the archipelago that had been done by the Spaniards—political integration as a colony of Spain, religious integration as a Catholic community—was not satisfactory for the purposes of the emerging nationalist movement. Thus, Rizal aimed for a third integration, which is that of a viable national community centered on itself (Majul 1959).

But how is this “nation” to come to life? If it is dormant from the past, how then to awaken it? If it is yet to be born, how then to conceive it? In *Morga*, Rizal had dug up the past, to make his countrymen “recall” their nationhood from before the impact of colonialism. In *Cien Años*, he had looked into the future, based on decisions taken or not taken today by both Spain and the Philippines. There he declared that should the Islands break away from Spain, they would choose a “federal republic” for their government. So if this is the answer to the political question, what is the answer to the social question?

Rizal’s answer is La Liga itself. Its architectural structure rests on an integration of building blocks, people’s councils spread all over the country, mutualist associations of producers and consumers united on the basis of cooperation and reciprocity. La Liga Filipina is at the national level an association of associations, vertically integrated but self-managing at all levels. Through the organization of credit and mutual help, the association aims to promote individual and cooperative entrepreneurship, a step towards the ideal of a non-exploitative social order because workers and peasants can possess their means of production, and each identifies his interests in relation to the whole.

Thus is Civil Society created, the realm of economic activities and social relations that comprise the material basis wherefrom the State arises.<sup>12</sup> That state, *theoretically*, could be a federal republic such as that envisioned by Pi y Margall for “la Federación española” in his Constitution of 1883, the union of autonomous regions, each with their own constitution, with the Philippines among them as a compact, vigorous, and homogeneous body the equal of any. Or it could be an independent federal republic with its own regions from Mindanao to Luzon united into one compact, vigorous and homogeneous body. *Theoretically*. But Rizal already knew, before he conceived of La Liga, that the autonomous union with Spain would never happen because it would have required as a precondition the transformation of Spain herself into a federation, and the balance of forces was against that. The only course of action, therefore, was to work

for the independence of the Philippines. Rizal came back to his country for that, and, organizationally and conceptually, La Liga Filipina was to be the first step to freedom.

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> All translations of Spanish texts in this essay are mine except those from Rizal's Annotations to Morga's *Sucesos de la Islas Filipinas*.
- <sup>2</sup> An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Filipino-Spanish Conference on the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 held at the University of the Philippines in June 2012, a rare occasion for scholars from both countries to revisit the intellectual and political ties between Spanish and Filipino political movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- <sup>3</sup> See Braudel 1976, Part Two, Chapter V: "Societies," pp. 704 –756 for the political system of 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spain.
- <sup>4</sup> Rejecting the divine right of kings and the social-contract theories of Hobbes and Locke, Suárez has been described as "the first convinced and avowed republican" (Villa 1997). <http://www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/article/other/57jnv9.htm>
- <sup>5</sup> Rizal's footnote: "The conversion of the Philippines into the Christian faith was the only excuse that gave the kings the right to the possession of the Islands, in the opinion of all men then, military as well as civilians and theologians..." But this was not true of the Philippines, as of so many other peoples, "the Catholic Faith [being but] a Palladian pretext to give an honest appearance to the rule" (Morga [1890] 2011, 342n261).
- <sup>6</sup> Rizal may have felt that he was conceding too much for his line of argumentation. In several footnotes he qualifies his own assertion: "these slaves were not always in such dismal condition [...] but tyrants and brutal men who abused their authority were not lacking, though they could not have surpassed the *encomenderos* [...]" Rizal repeatedly cites sources to prove that the pre-existing class structure was not more tyrannical here than elsewhere, in Europe and in history (Morga [1890] 2011, 276n106).
- <sup>7</sup> Rizal, quoted verbatim by Ricardo Carnicero, Military Commandant of Dapitan, in his Report to Gov. Gen. Eulogio Despujol. Reproduced in Retana 1907, 274.
- <sup>8</sup> In the Philippines, La Gloriosa led to the Cavite Mutiny of 1872 after the liberal Gov. Gen. Carlos Ma. de la Torre was recalled and replaced by another who, under clerical pressure, promptly revoked the reformist measures initiated by his predecessor, setting into motion this revolt, a milestone in Philippine revolutionary history. Because of the martyrdom of the three priests inculpated in the mutiny, this was a milestone too in Rizal's life. "Without 1872, Rizal would now be a Jesuit, and instead of writing *Noli me tangere*, would have written the contrary..." Rizal's letter to Mariano Ponce, 18 April 1889.

- <sup>9</sup> That is to say, pre-Marxist socialism, taking the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848 as the milestone and that of Marx's critique of Proudhon in *The Poverty of Philosophy* the year before. Marx had said of the three currents of French socialism, and of Proudhon in particular, back in 1842 that "writings such as those of Leroux, Considérant, and above all Proudhon's penetrating work, can be criticized only after long and deep study" (Karl Marx. 1842. "Communism and the Augsburg *Allgemeine Zeitung*" in *Rheinische Zeitung*, 16 October, Number 289. <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1842/10/16.htm>).
- <sup>10</sup> This part of Philippine history is well-researched, the best single volume being Schumacher 1997.
- <sup>11</sup> Rizal had a chance to establish a cooperative of producers and consumers whilst on exile in Dapitan. This is discussed in the memoirs (unpublished) of José Aseniero, one of Rizal's students in Dapitan. For an exposition of Rizal's initiatives in Dapitan in relation to contemporary issues of development, see Quibuyen 2011, 1–29.
- <sup>12</sup> The question will be asked: would Rizal's "development strategy" have been viable had it been given a chance? Avoiding counterfactual historiography, it should be borne in mind that premonopoly capitalism was very different in its structure and in the opportunities it presented to entrepreneurs from how it has developed since, and many cooperatives in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Western Europe had grown into significant business concerns, contributing substantially to economic development. And some of the utopian socialists like Robert Owen made great fortunes starting out with a small credit.

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