

Philippines. Exploring Rizal's Profound Poetry and Revolutionary Spirit Through Three Insightful Essays

Thursday 20 July 2023, by [SANTOS Soliman, Jr](#) (Date first published: 18 June 2011).

From his first poem at age 8 to his final scribbled words before his execution, discover the depth and evolution of Philippine national hero Jose Rizal's revolutionary thought in this compelling collection of essays by Soliman Santos, Jr. This fresh analysis will help students understand:

- **The amazingly profound themes in Rizal's poem "Sa Aking Mga Kabata" written at age 8**
- **How Rizal's final poem "Mi Ultimo Adios" embraced the Katipunan and 1896 Revolution**
- **Rizal's influence on the writings of leftist leader Jose Maria Sison**

We present below three short but substantive essays that explore Rizal's revolutionary spirit and development of thought through close readings of his poetry and an examination of his influence on Sison. A must-read for those seeking new insights into one of the Philippines' most important historical figures. Keep reading to learn more about Rizal's journey from his first poem to his final revolutionary stand.

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RIZAL'S "SA AKING MGA KABATA": AN AMAZINGLY PROFOUND POEM

NAGA CITY, 1980 [with 2011 Author's Notes] — "Sa Aking Mga Kabata" ("To My Fellow Children") is known as the first poem of Jose Rizal. It was written in 1869, when Rizal was only eight years old. Unlike most of Rizal's poems which were originally written in Spanish, this one was originally written in Tagalog. This was but apt as its message is love of the native tongue. This message is clearest in the oft-quoted first two lines of the third stanza (English translation by Frank C. Laubach):

*Ang hindi magmahal sa kanyang salita
mahigit sa hayop at malansang isda.*

*(Whosoever knows not how to love his native tongue
Is worse than any beast or evil smelling-fish.)*

The other points made in elaboration of this message shows a profundity amazing for an eight-year-old child. These are the same points Rizal makes and develops in later and much more mature writings. Take the first and second stanzas of the poem:

*Kapag ang baya'y sadyang umiibig
sa kanyang salitang kaloob ng langit,
sanlang kalayaan nasa ring masapit
katulad ng ibong nasa himpapawid.*

Pagka't ang salita'y isang kahatulan
sa bayan, sa nayo't mga kaharian,
st ang isang tao'y katulad, kabagay
ng alin mang likha noong kalayaan.

*(Whenever people of a country truly love
The language which by heaven they were taught to use,
That country also surely liberty possesses
as does the bird which soars to freer space above.)*

For language is the final judge and referee
Upon the people in the land where it holds sway;
In truth our human race resembles in this way
The other living beings born in liberty.)

Rizal points out the relationship between love of the native tongue and love of freedom, and the role played by language for a people. There is a dialectical, reciprocal or mutually reinforcing relationship between the native tongue and freedom. On one hand, it is only under freedom, more precisely national freedom, that the native tongue can flourish. On the other, use of the native tongue helps preserve national freedom. **[2011 Author's Note:** And more so for minority than for majority peoples. At present, among the internationally recognized human rights of minorities are the right to preserve and develop their own culture, religion, and language. This is of particular relevance to the Mindanao peace process.]

As Rizal's character Simoun put it in *El Filibusterismo* (1891): "...while a people preserves its language, it preserves the mark of its liberty, as a man preserves his independence while he holds sway to his own way of thinking. Language is the thought of the people." It is precisely the last point that is Simoun's basis for saying that "Spanish will never be the general language of the country, the people will never talk it, because the conceptions of their minds and the feelings of their hearts cannot be expressed in that language - each people has its own tongue, as it has its own way of thinking." The same may be said of English which is presently one of the official languages and is the principal medium of instruction.

In "Our Task: To Make Rizal Obsolete" (in his book *Filipinos in the Philippines*), Renato Constantino notes: "One of the tragedies of our country today is that, though formally independent, our people can understand each other (though imperfectly at that) only by means of a language not their own. This is one result of centuries of colonial rule, and we are all its victims. Rizal considered our need for a foreign language as our general medium of communication, both ridiculous and pathetic. He warned strongly about the dangers of a foreign language taking the place of our own."

Constantino notes what is perhaps the greatest danger and in the process shows why use of the native tongue helps preserve national freedom: "By using a foreign language as our basic means of communication, we lay ourselves open, without any defenses, to the incursions of a foreign culture."

Where the language barrier would have served to temper the flow of this cultural invasion, affording us the opportunity of intelligent, deliberate and selective assimilation, the irresistible influx of foreign culture for which our use of the foreign language has opened the way, has swept aside our native traditions, manners and values."

Take the last two lines of the third stanza of "Sa Aking Mga Kabata":

*kaya ang marapat pagyamaning kusa
na tulad sa inang tunay na nagpala.*

*(To make our language richer ought to be our wish
The same as any mother loves to feed her young.)*

Rizal showed here a very positive attitude about the development of the native tongue. Positive not only in desiring its development but also in recognizing its capacity for development. [2011 **Author's Note:** The mention of "ina" ("mother") supports the current educational advocacy for Mother-Tongue Based Instruction or Multilingual Education. And "mother tongue" or "native tongue" is not necessarily the national language, the currently mainly Tagalog-based Filipino, but it could be any of the regional languages like Bikol.]

This brings us to the fourth and fifth stanza of "Sa Aking Mga Kabata":

*Ang wikang tagalog tulad din sa latin,
sa ingles, kastila at salitang anghel,
sa pagka ang Poong maalam tumingin
ang siyang nag-gawad, nagbigay sa atin.*

*Ang salita nati'y huad din sa iba
na may alfabeto at sariling letra,
na kaya'y nawala'y dinatnan ng sigwa
ang lunday sa lawa noong dakong una.*

*(Tagalog and the latin language are the same
And English and Castilian and the angel's tongue
And God, whose watchful care o'er all is flung,
Has given us his blessing in the speech we claim.*

*Our mother tongue, like all the highest that we know
Had alphabet and letters of its very own;
But these were lost - by furious waves were overthrown
like bancas in the stormy sea, long years ago.)*

Rizal puts Tagalog on par with such world language as Latin, English and Spanish. His basis for doing so is given in the first two lines of the fifth stanza. This is similar to what Father Pedro Chirino wrote in his historical book *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas* (1604) about Tagalog: "I found in this language four qualities of the four greatest languages of the world - Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Spanish."

Of course, at eight years of age, Rizal had not yet read Chirino. He would read Chirino as part of his historical research for his *Annotations* (1889) to Morga's historical book *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas* (1609). But by eight years of age, Rizal was already exposed to Latin and Spanish though not yet to English (to which he would be exposed to only after his first departure from the Philippines in 1880).

What is more amazing is that at such an early age he was aware of the ancient or pre-colonial Filipino syllabary. The last two lines of the fifth stanza could very well be an allusion of the fact that *“the friars had burned and destroyed the artifacts of pre-colonial culture as the handiwork of the devil”* (to use a formulation from Amado Guerrero’s *Philippine Society and Revolution*). Although it is doubtful that, at eight years of age, Rizal knew about this. He would know more about the ancient Filipinos syllabary and the destruction of pre-colonial artifacts in the course of his historical research for his *Annotations* to Morga. The destruction of pre-colonial artifacts was part of cultural subjugation that was in turn a part of the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. **[2011 Author’s Note:** In the contemporary age, cultural subjugation is done more subtly and effectively, because often done through the sub-conscious with the use of information technology, through globalization, particularly its cultural aspect characterized by Western hegemony and especially Americanization which impinges on the cultural and religious identities and customs of many peoples of the world.]

Rizal described this cultural subjugation in the first part of his essay “The Philippines A Century Hence” (1889-1890): “Then began a new era for the Filipinos. They gradually lost their ancient traditions, their recollections, - they forgot their writings, their songs, their poetry, their laws in order to learn by heart other doctrines, which they did not understand, other ethics, other tasks, different from those inspired in their race by their climate and their way of thinking. Then there was a falling-off, they were lowered in their own eyes, they became ashamed of what was distinctively their own in order to admire and praise what was foreign and incomprehensible; their spirit was broken and they acquiesced.”

With this we are back where we started: the dialectical relationship between the native tongue/culture and freedom. But have we over-interpreted “Sa Aking Mga Kabata”? We are well aware of Leon Ma. Guerrero’s word of caution in his excellent biography of Rizal *The First Filipino* regarding over-interpretations of Rizal’s “To the Filipino Youth” (1879) and “Along the Pasig” (1880): *“In truth, we must not read too much into the effusions of our young poet or seek in his casual rhymes a premature ripening of his ‘race jealousy’ and still embryonic nationalism.”*

If Rizal’s nationalism was still embryonic in 1879 (when he wrote “To the Filipino Youth”), then one can expect it to be more so in 1869 (when he wrote “Sa Aking Mga Kabata”).

But one can hardly describe as embryonic a nationalism that clearly links love of the native tongue with love of freedom. Either Rizal hit by chance (*natsambahan*) the points made in the poem or his nationalism was the not as embryonic as Guerrero made it out to be. **[2011 Author’s Note:** *Matinik talaga*, or in Bikol terms, *oragon si Rizal*. [\[1\]](#)

By **SOLIMAN M. SANTOS, JR.**

RIZAL’S “MI ULTIMO ADIOS”: EMBRACING THE KATIPUNAN AND THE REVOLUTION

NAGA CITY, 1981 [with 2011 Author’s Notes] — “Mi Ultimo Adios” (“My Last Farewell”) is Jose Rizal’s last, best and most popular poem. It was written on 28 December 1896 or two days before Rizal’s execution. Leon Ma. Guerrero, in book *The First Filipino*, writes that one of the two voices speaking this farewell is “the voice of the patriot, innocent but guilty, who now makes his own the Revolution he has discouraged, deplored and condemned.” What is relevant for our purposes are the

second and third stanzas of the poem (English translation by Charles E. Derbyshire):

*En campos de batalla, luchando con delirio,
Otros te dan sus vidas, sin dudas, sin pesar.
El sitio nada importa: cipres, laurel o lirio,
Cadalso o campo abierto, combate o cruel martirio,
Lo mismo es si lo piden la Patria y el hogar.*

Yo muero, cuando veo que el cielo se colora
Y al fin anuncia el día, tres lobrego capuz;
Si grana necesitas, para tener tu aurora,
¡Vierte la sangre mía, derramala en buen hora,
Y dorela un reflejo de su naciente luz!

*(On the field of battle, 'mid the frenzy of light,
Others have given their lives, without doubt or heed;
The place matters not - cypress or laurel or lily white,
Scaffold or open plain, combat or martyrdom's plight,
'Tis ever the same, to serve our home and country's need.*

I die just when I see the dawn break,
Through the gloom of night, to herald the day;
And if color is lacking my blood thou shalt take,
Pour'd out at need for thy dear sake,
To dye with its crimson the waking ray.)

Guerrero elaborates on his point:

"[For Rizal] It is too late for worldly wisdom, "others are giving their lives on battlefields, without regrets or doubts, but it is not too late to join them, "gibbet or open field, combat or cruel sacrifice, place matters not, " nor does it matter if the end be "laurel" of victory, "lily" of defeat, or "cypress" of martyrdom. When it is required by the Nation, it is beautiful to "fall that she may rise," to "die that she may live." Now, though not perhaps in the past, he is certain of final victory; the poet turns prophet on the brink of the grave; he dies "when day breaks at last after gloomy night, " and the blood he is to shed will be "gilded by her rising light."

Guerrero's point is well taken. It would not be stretching things too far to say that, at the last moment, Rizal embraced the Katipunan and the Philippine Revolution of 1896.

"On the field of battle . . . Others have given their lives . . ." - who else could these "others" refer to but the Katipuneros? As of the writing of the poem, the Revolution, which broke out with the Cry of Pugadlawin on 23 August 1896, was spreading to many provinces and was being met by the Spanish authorities with a reign of terror. Indeed, many were giving their lives - not only in "combat" in the "open plain" but also in "martyrdom's plight" at the "scaffold." [2011 Author's Note: Or to put it in more contemporary terms, there was then revolutionary armed struggle but also other forms of struggle, including peaceful forms like Rizal's, that just the same resulted in martyrdom.]

" . . . I see the dawn break, through the gloom of night, to herald the day . . ." - what else could this "dawn" refer to but the imminent victory of the Revolution that would overthrow Spanish rule?
[2011 Author's Note: In fact, no less than the Declaration of Philippine Independence on 12 June 1898 noted that prophecy in this way: *"... the redemption of this unfortunate country as foretold by Dr. Don Jose Rizal in his magnificent verses which he composed in his prison cell prior to his*

execution, liberating it from the Yoke of Spanish domination.”]

But Rizal does not stop at recognizing the “dawn”. He goes further – he offers his blood, soon to be shed, that it may add color to the dawn of freedom. Indeed, it may be said that Rizal embraced the Katipunan and the Revolution not only in word but also in deed. This makes him a revolutionary. A revolutionary leader, Mao Zedong, once said: *“Whoever sides with the revolutionary people is a revolutionary . . . Whoever sides with the revolutionary people in words only but acts otherwise is a revolutionary in speech. Whoever sides with the revolutionary people in deed as well as in word is a revolutionary in the full sense.”*

The poem was, in effect, a **retraction** of Rizal’s previous repudiations of the Katipunan and the Revolution, the latest and heaviest of which was his *Manifesto* of 15 December 1896, or about two weeks before the poem was written. Indeed, it may be asked, could Rizal have made such a volte-face (about-face) after only two weeks? Yes, it is possible. Talking about retractions, there is Rizal’s more famous *Retraction* (of his religious beliefs) of 29 December 1896, which Guerrero convincingly argues to be genuine. If Rizal could retract his religious beliefs at that moment, could he not do the same with some of his political beliefs? Or, perhaps Rizal was only being consistent in his political beliefs – in other words, not really retracting these beliefs. [**2011 Author’s Note:** Not really **rejecting** but instead actually **reaffirming** these beliefs, to again use more contemporary terms.]

Rizal had opposed the Katipunan and the Revolution because he believed that the Filipinos were not yet ready for freedom and they were not yet ready for freedom because they were not yet deserving of it, in particular they had no sense of national community. Perhaps, Rizal belatedly realized that the Filipinos were deserving of freedom after all.

Renato Constantino points out in his main critical aessay on Rizal, “Veneration Without Understanding” (in his book *Dissent and Counter-Consciousness*): *“A people have every right to be free . . . People learn and educate themselves in the process of struggling for freedom and liberty. They attain their highest potential only when they are masters of their own destiny.”* The Filipinos who rose in revolt were making themselves deserving of freedom in the process of struggling for it. In that process, the Filipinos were beginning to develop a sense of national community.

As Cesar Adib Majul asks in “A Critique of Rizal’s Concept of a Filipino Nation” by way of commenting on the lines “ . . . I see the dawn break, through the gloom of night, to herald the day . . .”: *“Could it be possible that Rizal was led to believe that the Filipinos were beginning to develop a sense of national community as partially demonstrated by the Katipunan uprising?”* Rizal would not have used “dawn” and “day”, if he did not believe that a truly new society – one in which the slaves of today will not be the tyrants of tomorrow – was incipient. This, in the final analysis, was why Rizal offered his blood that it may add color to the dawn of freedom.

All these underscore the complex and developmental character of Rizal’s beliefs in general and political beliefs in particular – beliefs which are not to be simplified by such convenient labels as “reformist” or “assimilationist.” [**2011 Author’s Notes:** And so it should be with contemporary labels like “nat-dem” and “soc-dem,” “reaffirmist” (RA) and “rejectionist” (RJ), and so on.]

By SOLIMAN M. SANTOS, JR.

RIZAL IN THE WRITINGS OF JOSE MA. SISON

NAGA CITY, 1986 [with 2011 Author's Notes] — Reading Jose Ma. Sison, especially his essays of the Sixties, one is struck by his frequent references to Jose Rizal, his works and characters. This can be readily seen in Sison's first book *Struggle for National Democracy* (New Edition 1972), a collection of his essays of the Sixties and messages for the Seventies. Incidentally, the Introduction to the New Edition was made by current celebrity Antonio Zumel, then Chairman of the Amado V. Hernandez Memorial Foundation which published the edition.

The very first article in SND is "Rizal the Social Critic", originally entitled "Rizal the 'Subversive'." As for the rest of the articles, including messages, there are references to Rizal, his works and characters in 11 out of 29 selections. These are Kabataang Makabayan Founding Speech, "The October 24th Movement," Message to the Third National Congress Kabataang Makabayan, Message to MAKIBAKA on the Women's Liberation Movement, "The National Democratic Movement and the Political Activist," "On the Standard Issues of the Day," "Land Reform and National Democracy," "The Sophism of the Christian Social Movement," "The Need for a Cultural Revolution," "The Tasks of the Second Propaganda Movement," "Towards a National Democratic Teacher's Movement," and "The Mercenary Tradition in the AFP."

The briefest reference is in "Sophism" which mentions the Noli-Fili Law. The lengthiest reference is in "Land Reform" which relates the story of Cablesang Tales, Juli, Tano/Carolino, Tandang Selo and Matanglawin. Sison, in fact, is at his best when alluding to Rizal's characters. Perhaps the most controversial reference to Rizal is that found in Sison's Message to the Third National Congress Kabataang Makabayan: "*What has come to be known as the Second Propaganda Movement makes its antecedent - that of Rizal, Lopez Jaena, del Pilar and the Lunas - a mere dinner party of exiles....The incarceration of Nilo Tayag is richer in implications than the exile of Jose Rizal to Dapitan.*" [2011 Author's Note: But what may be the unkindest cut is the very closing phrase in Sison's above-said main article on Rizal: "...he was led like a lamb to Bagumbayan to be killed." To the extent that the lamb is a symbol of meekness, this passage is unfair to Rizal, not to mention his supreme sacrifice.]

The other book attributed to Sison is of course *Philippine Society and Revolution* by Amado Guerrero, founding Chairman of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP). Shortly after Sison's capture in 1977, the Balita ng Malayang Pilipinas reported that "*Sison had signed earlier an affidavit identifying himself as chairman of the CPP.*" Shortly after his release in 1986, he admitted having been chairman of the CPP. In fact, *MIDWEEK* magazine asked him why he revealed this. In *PSR*, Rizal was treated in only one paragraph of the Review of Philippine History. The last word on him there was that "*he betrayed it (the Philippine Revolution of 1896) by calling on the people to lay down their arms a few days before his execution.*" [2011 Author's Note: Such "betrayal" would be premised on one's being part of the revolutionary movement, the Katipunan at that time, but all indications are that Rizal was not, notwithstanding the findings at his trial, "*the tragic farce,*" as J.C. Orendain put it.]

In Amado Guerrero's "The Correct Orientation on the Constitutional Convention", there is this passage: "*The political intervention of the clergy is but an ingredient in the rise of fascism in this country. It is but another camouflage for the social cancer and reign of greed.*" The allusion is, of course, to *The Social Cancer* and *The Reign of Greed*, Charles E. Derbyshire's translations of Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, respectively. Then, in Amado Guerrero's "The Treachery of Taruc: A Negative Example", two of the five footnotes are references to Rizal's characters, the first regarding Pilosopong Tasyo and the second regarding Capitan Basilio and Capitan Tinong.

During Sison's imprisonment, he wrote not only his more famous poems but also essays and messages. Many of the essays of the Eighties were written under *noms de plume*, or if you will, *noms de guerre*. In his Tribute to Edgar M. Jopson, Sison compared Jopson to Rizal, after noting that both were outstanding alumni of the Ateneo:

"Rizal contributed much to the emergence of the national democratic revolution and died for it. Jopson has also contributed much to the resurgent national democratic revolution and died for it."

But I think Jopson surpasses Rizal in certain aspects. Jopson had the advantage of coming into a later era, learning from lessons of the past and grasping more progressive ideas for the realization of the national democratic revolution... Jopson was able to reach a higher level of revolutionary theory and practice than Rizal."

In another tribute, this time to "Aquino: Martyr and Patriot", using the pen-name Alma Rason, Sison again made a comparison to Rizal:

"Aquino was like Rizal. Despite the threats to his life by the enemy, he returned to the country with the honest desire of working for the improvement of the political, economic and social conditions of the people."

Aquino was reformist and was for non-violent change. He held the idea that the fascist regime could be persuaded to depart from its evil ways and reconcile with the people.

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Like Rizal, Aquino while alive could not realize his noble objectives under the shadow of the enemy but was persecuted and finally martyred. By his martyrdom, however, his name has become a battle-cry for the entire Filipino people."

Then, in an outline "On the Possibility of Restoring Democracy", using the pseudonym Bayani C. Aquino, Sison argued:

"The Christians under Imperial Rome ceased to be massacred every fifty years only when they got the sword of Constantine. Rizal would not be honored today as a hero and martyr had the Filipino people not achieved success in the Philippine revolution. Even Gandhi merely represented a complement to the readiness of the Indian people to wage armed revolution against the British. The Holy Scriptures is one with Marxism- Leninism in upholding the principle of just war against tyranny."

After his release, Sison undertook a series of lectures on "Philippine Crisis and Revolution". The first in the series of ten dealt with the "Historical Roots of the Philippine Crisis". Here Rizal is referred to as among "the best of the reformists" for his role in the reform movement.

It is evident that Rizal the reformist has had quite an impact on Sison the revolutionary. So, when and where did Sison learn his Rizal? In Sison's own life story to *Sunday Inquirer Magazine*, he narrates that: "In Grade IV, I became very receptive to stories about our national revolutionary heroes in social studies. Those stories found fertile ground in my mind which had been impressed by stories at home about the revolutionary struggles against Spain, the US and Japan." For high school, Sison went from Ateneo to Letran. Even in narrating his life story, he cannot avoid a reference to Rizal: "I transferred to Letran, comforting myself that I was doing a Rizal in reverse. He had transferred from Letran to Ateneo." Sison would "devote myself to reading books outside the curriculum." His formal as well as self-education most certainly included Rizal.

How then does Sison rate Rizal? While categorizing Rizal as a liberal reformist, Sison, in "Rizal the Social Critic", refers to him as *"a leading representative of the enlightened stratum or 'left wing' of the middle class and "a progressive and radical of his own time"*. Sison further stated: *"When we consider the anti-colonial and anti-clerical writings of Rizal, we immediately perceive that national democracy of the old type, that is to say, of the now outmoded liberal cast, developed in the process of struggle."* So, in a manner of speaking, Rizal was a national democrat in the sense that he objectively contributed to the advancement of the national democratic revolution, albeit of the old type. [2011 Author's Note: Filipino social-democrats or "soc-dems" would surely contest this "nat-dem" characterization of Rizal.]

Sison continued, focusing on Rizal's two novels and the question of reform or revolution: *"When Rizal wrote his masterworks, Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo, he explored the possibility of reform first and, upon exhausting that possibility within the colonial framework, he also explored the possibility of revolution..."*

In the Fili, Rizal exposes thoroughly and systematically the decadence of the system as the beginning of a revolutionary situation."

Sison, however, does not go as far as categorizing Rizal as a revolutionary as does Jesuit historian John N. Schumacher. Schumacher, in his article "Rizal the Revolutionary and the Ateneo" in the academic journal *Philippine Studies*, says *"what makes Rizal a revolutionary is the fact that he wanted not only to reform, repress, do away with, the abuses from which his people suffered; he wanted to change the Filipinos themselves, the very structure of the society in which he lived."* That Rizal *"looked...to the creation of a just society in which the rights of all would be respected"*, according to Schumacher, *"is another reason why Rizal was a revolutionary, and one can even say a radical revolutionary... Rizal's thoughts will continue to be subversive of all societies which fail to bring justice and freedom to the Filipino people."* Indeed, the debate whether Rizal was a reformist or a revolutionary also depends on one's definition of revolution, as in the EDSA Revolution.

Sison the radical revolutionary is surprisingly not as harsh on Rizal the liberal reformist as is nationalist historian Renato Constantino. Constantino's two major essays on Rizal are "Our Task: To Make Rizal Obsolete" in his book *The Filipinos in the Philippines* and "Veneration Without Understanding" in his book *Dissent and Counter-Consciousness*. The titles are indication enough of Constantino's critical attitude towards Rizal. *"To make Rizal obsolete"* is not as irreverent as it sounds and, on the contrary, is actually a compliment to Rizal: *"When a new generation of Filipinos will be able to read Rizal as a mirror of our past and not as a reproach to our social present, only then can we say that we have truly honored Rizal because we have made him obsolete by completing his work. . . . A reorientation of our ways and of our thoughts along nationalist lines will fulfill the dreams of Rizal and at the same time make them obsolete as goals because the dream will have become a reality."*

In "Veneration Without Understanding," Constantino excoriates Rizal for having repudiated the Revolution. He does not mince words: *"those words were treasonous in the light of the Filipinos' struggle against Spain. Rizal repudiated the one act which really synthesized our nationalist aspirations, and yet we consider him a nationalist leader... The exposure of his weaknesses and limitations will also mean our liberation, for he has, to a certain extent, become part of the superstructure that supports present consciousness... for Rizal repudiated real decolonization... His class position, his upbringing, and his foreign education were profound influences which constituted a limitation on his understanding of his countrymen."*

Sison is also critical in his evaluation of Rizal. His main criticisms of Rizal, other than betrayal of the Revolution, are failure to state categorically the need for revolutionary armed struggle to effect

separation from Spain, putting his trust in the enemy and the naïve hope that he would work for the cause of the nation in the open and in the city. [2011 Author's Note: Sison's holding Rizal up to the standard of Maoist protracted people's war is anachronistic and thus unfair. The author has a separate reading of Rizal's "Mi Ultimo Adios" as finally embracing the Katipunan and the Philippine Revolution of 1896 [see above].]

Like Rizal, Sison's career is not only political but also literary. Both are thinkers, organizers and writers, in varying degrees. In a post-release interview with *Midweek*, Sison was asked about literature and revolutionary politics. His answer: *"And you know, I think it is a requirement for revolutionary leadership to have a literary imagination. The scientific mind is important in analyzing given facts. But to be able to anticipate what will happen next, you need literary imagination. . .With imagination, you create something new."* If Rizal is required reading for Filipino students, more so should it be for Filipino revolutionaries, going by the example of Jose Ma. Sison. [2011 Author's Note: But Rizal's novels do not appear to be "required reading" in the CPP, unlike they were in the Katipunan, at least they were in the book list and collection of its Supremo Andres Bonifacio.]

By SOLIMAN M. SANTOS, JR.

P.S.

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6-16-11.

Footnotes

[1] "Really clever, Rizal" - ESSF note.