

## Filipino Version of the Cavite Mutiny of 1872

By Dr. T.H. Pardo de Tavera

The Filipino version of the bloody incident of Cavite in 1872 was written by Dr. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, Filipino scholar, scientist, and historical researcher.<sup>1</sup> According to him, this incident was merely a mutiny by the native Filipino soldiers and laborers of the Cavite arsenal against the harsh policy of despotic Governor and Captain-General Rafael de Izquierdo (1871-1873) which abolished their old-time privileges of exemption from paying the annual tribute and from rendering the *polo* (forced labor). The loss of these privileges was naturally resented by the soldiers and laborers. Some of them, impelled by volcanic wrath, rose in arms on the night of January 20, 1872, and killed the commanding officer of the Cavite arsenal and other Spanish officers. This was easily suppressed by the Spanish troops which were rushed from Manila. This turbulent Cavite incident, which was magnified by the Spanish officials and friars into a revolt for Philippine independence, is narrated by Pardo de Tavera, as follows:

The arrival of General Izquierdo (1871-1873) was the signal for a complete change in the aspect of affairs. The new governor soon made it clear that his views were different from those of La Torre — that there would be no change in the established form of government — and he at once announced that he intended to govern the people "with a crucifix in one hand and a sword in the other."

His first official act was to prohibit the founding of a school of arts and trades, which was being organized by the efforts and funds raised by natives of standing in the

<sup>1</sup> Trinidad Hermenegildo Pardo de Tavera was born in Manila on April 13, 1857, of parents belonging to the Spanish nobility. His father, Felix Pardo de Tavera, was a lawyer and a brother of the patriot Joaquin Pardo de Tavera, a law professor and government official. During the early years of the American rule he served as a member of Taft's Philippine Commission and founded the Federal Party. He died in Manila on March 26, 1925, aged 68.

\* Pardo de Tavera "Historical Account of the Philippines from Its Discovery to 1903," *Census of the Philippine Islands: 1903* (Washington, D.C., 1905), pp. 376-380.

community, but the founding of which did not tally with the views of the religious orders. Governor Izquierdo believed that the establishment of the new school was merely a pretext for the organization of a political club, and he not only did not allow it to be opened but made a public statement accusing the Filipinos who had charge of the movement. All of those who had offered their support to ex-Governor La Torre were classed as *personas sospechosas* (suspects), a term that since that time has been used in the Philippine Islands to designate any person who refused to servilely obey the wishes and whims of the authorities. The conservative element in the islands now directed the governmental policy, and the educated Filipinos fell more and more under the displeasure and suspicion of the governor.

The peace of the colony was broken by a certain incident which, though unimportant in itself, was probably the origin of the political agitation which, constantly growing for thirty years, culminated in the overthrow of the Spanish sovereignty in the Philippine Islands. From time immemorial the workmen in the arsenal at Cavite and in the barracks of the artillery and engineer corps had been exempt from the payment of the tribute tax and from obligation to work certain days each year on public improvements. General Izquierdo believed the time opportune for abolishing these privileges and ordered that in the future all such workmen should pay tribute and labor on public improvements. This produced great dissatisfaction among the workmen affected and the men employed in the arsenal at Cavite went on a strike, but, yielding to pressure and threats made by the authorities, they subsequently returned to their labors.

The workmen in the Cavite arsenal were all natives of that town and of the neighboring town of San Roque. In a short while the dissatisfaction and discontent with the government spread all over that section and even the entire troops became disaffected. On the night of January 20, 1872, there was an uprising among the soldiers in the San Felipe fort, in Cavite, and the commanding officer and other Spanish officers in charge of the fort were

assassinated. Forty marines attached to the arsenal and 22 artillerymen under Sergeant La Madrid took part in this uprising, and it was believed that the entire garrison in Cavite was disaffected and probably implicated. But if the few soldiers who precipitated the attack believed they would be supported by the bulk of the army and that a general rebellion against Spain would be declared in the islands, they were deceived. When the news of the uprising was received in Manila, General Izquierdo sent the commanding general to Cavite, who reinforced the native troops, took possession of the fort, and put the rebels to the sword. Sergeant La Madrid has been blinded and badly burned by the explosion of a sack of powder and, being unable to escape, was also cut down. A few of the rebels were captured and taken to Manila and there was no further disturbance of the peace or insubordination of any kind.

This uprising among the soldiers in Cavite was used as a powerful lever by the Spanish residents and by the friars. During the time that General La Torre was chief executive in the Philippine Islands the influential Filipinos did not hesitate to announce their hostility to the religious orders, and the Central Government in Madrid had announced its intention to deprive the friars in these islands of all powers of intervention in matters of civil government and of the direction and management of the management of the university. Moret, the colonial minister, had drawn up a scheme of reforms by which he proposed to make a radical change in the colonial system of government which was to harmonize with the principles for which the revolution<sup>3</sup> in Spain had been fought. It was due to these facts and promises that the Filipinos had great hopes of an improvement in the affairs of their country, while the friars, on the other hand, feared that their power in the colony would soon be completely a thing of the past.

The mutiny in Cavite gave the conservative element that is, those who favored a continuation of the colonial *modus vivendi* — an opportunity to represent to the Spanish Government that a vast conspiracy was afoot and organized throughout the archipelago with the object of destroying the Spanish sovereignty. They stated that the Spanish Government in Madrid was to blame for the propagation of pernicious doctrines and for the hopes that had been held out from Madrid to the Filipino people, and also because of the leanings of ex-Governor La Torre and of other public functionaries who had been sent to the Philippine Islands by the Government that succeeded Queen Isabella. The fall of the new rulers in Spain within a few days, as well as other occurrences, seemed to accentuate the claims made by the conservative element in the Philippine Islands regarding the peril which threatened Spanish sovereignty in the islands; it appeared as though the prophecies were about to be fulfilled. The Madrid authorities were not able to combat public opinion in that country; no opportunity was given nor time taken to make a thorough investigation of the real facts or extent of the alleged revolution; the conservative element in the Philippine Islands painted the local condition of affairs in somber tints; and the Madrid Government came to believe, or at least to suspect, that a scheme was being concocted throughout the islands to shake off Spanish sovereignty. Consistent with the precedents of their colonial rule, the repressive measures adopted to quell the supposed insurrection were strict and sudden. No attempt appears to have been made to ascertain whether or not the innocent suffered with the guilty, and the only end sought appeared to be to inspire terror in the minds of all by making examples of a certain number, so that none in the future should attempt, nor even dream of any attempt at secession.

Many of the best known Filipinos were denounced to the military authorities, and they, the sons of Spaniards born in the islands and men of mixed blood (Spanish and Chinese), as well as the Indians of pure blood, as the Philippine Malays were called, were persecuted and punished without distinction by the military authorities.

Those who dared to oppose themselves to the friars were punished with special severity; among others may be mentioned the priests Burgos, a half-blood Spaniard, Zamora, a half-blood Chinaman, and Gomez, a pure-blood Tagalog, who had vigorously opposed the friars in the litigation over the curacies in the various provinces. The three priests mentioned were condemned to death by a military court-martial; and Antonio M. Regidor, a lawyer and councilman of Manila, Joaquin Pardo de Tavera, lawyer and member of the administrative council, P. Mendoza, curate of Santa Cruz, Guevarra, curate of Quiapo, the priests Mariano Sevilla, Feliciano Gomez, Ballesteros, Jose Basa, the lawyers Carillo, Basa, Enriquez, Crisanto Reyes, Maximo Paterno, and many others were sentenced to life imprisonment on the Marianas Islands. The Government thus secured its object of terrorizing the Filipino people, but the punishments meted out were not only unjust but were from every point of view unnecessary, as there had not been the remote intention on the part of anyone to overthrow the Spanish sovereignty. On the contrary, the attitude of Moret, Labra, Becerra, and other high officials in the Madrid Government had awakened in the breasts of the Filipinos a lively friendship for the home government, and never had the ties which bound the colony to Spain been as close as they were during the short interval between the arrival of General La Torre and the time when General Izquierdo, in the name of the home government, was guilty of the atrocities mentioned above, of which innocent men were made victims.

A careful study of the history and documents of that time brings to light the part which the religious orders played in that sad drama. One of the results of the so-called revolution of Cavite was to strengthen the power of the friars in the Philippine Islands in such manner that the Madrid Government, which up to that time had contemplated reducing the power of the religious orders in these islands, was obliged not only to abandon its intention, but to place a yet greater measure of official influences at the service of the friars, and from that time they were considered as an important factor in the preservation of the Spanish sovereignty in the colony.

This influence was felt throughout the islands, and not only were the friars taken into the confidence of the Government, but the Filipino people looked upon the religious orders as their real masters and as the representatives, powerful and unsparing, of the Spanish Kingdom.

But there were other results following upon the unfortunate policy adopted by Governor Izquierdo. Up to that time there had been no intention of secession from Spain, and the only aspiration of the people was to secure the material and educational advancement of the country. The Filipino people had never blamed the Spanish nation for the backward condition in which the islands existed, nor for the injustices committed in the islands by the Spanish officials; but on the contrary it was the custom to lay all the blame for these things on the individual officers guilty of maladministration, and no attempt had been made to investigate whether or not the evils under which the islands suffered were due to fundamental causes. The persecutions which began under Governor Izquierdo were based on the false assumption that the Filipino people were desirous of independence, and although this was an unfounded accusation, there were many martyrs to the cause, among whom were found many of the most intelligent and well-to-do people, without distinction of color or race or nationality, who were sentenced to death, to imprisonment, or were expatriated because they were believed to aspire to the independence of these islands. The fear which the people felt of the friars and of the punishments meted out by the Government was exceeded only by the admiration which the Filipino people had for those who did not hesitate to stand up for the rights of the country. In this manner the persecutions to which the people were subjected served as a stimulus and an educative force, and from that time the rebellion was nursed in secret and the passive resistance to the abuses of the official power became greater day by day.

No attempt was made to allay the ill-feeling which existed between the Filipinos and the Spaniards, especially the friars, caused by the mutiny in Cavite and the cruel

manner in which the punishment was meted out. Many years would have been necessary to heal the wounds felt by the large number of families whose members were made the victims of the unjust sentences of the military courts-martial. Nothing was done by the Government to blot out the recollection of these actions; on the contrary, it appeared to be its policy to continually bring up the memory of these occurrences as a reminder to the malcontents of what they had to expect; but the only thing accomplished was to increase the popular discontent. It was from that time that every disagreement between the Spaniards and Filipinos, however trivial, was given a racial or political character; everytime a friar was insulted or injured in any way, it was claimed to be an act of hostility to the Spanish nation.

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Dr. T. H. Pardo de Tavera

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### Official Report of Governor Izquierdo on the Cavite Mutiny of 1872

Governor General Rafael Izquierdo reported to the Spanish Minister of War dated Manila, January 23, 1872, blaming the Cavite Mutiny on the native clergy, some local residents, intellectuals, and even *El Eco Filipino*, a Madrid-based reformist newspaper. Significantly, he calls the military mutiny an "insurrection", an "Uprising", and a "revolution". The text of the report is as follows:<sup>4</sup>

From the summary of information received — that is, from the declaration made before the fiscal — it seems definite that the insurrection was motivated and prepared by the native clergy, by the mestizos and native lawyers, and by those known here as abogadillos. Some are residents of Manila, others from Cavite, and some from the nearby provinces.

The instigators, to carry out their criminal project, protested against the injustice of the government in not paying the provinces for their tobacco crop, and against the usury that some (officials) practise in (handling) documents that the Finance department gives crop owners who have to sell them at a loss. They encouraged the rebellion by protesting what they called the injustice of having obliged the workers in the Cavite arsenal to pay tribute starting January 1 (1872) and to render personal service, from which they were formerly exempted.

To seduce the native troops, they resorted to superstitions with which the *indios* are so prone to believe; persuading them that the Chief of State (hari) would be an ecclesiastic and the rest of the clergy who backed the uprising would celebrate daily for its success. Thus the rebellion could not fail because God was with them; and those who would not revolt they would kill immediately. Taking advantage of the ignorance of those

<sup>4</sup> Carlos Quirino, "More Documents on Burgos," *Philippine Studies*, Manila, Ateneo de Manila University, Vol. 18, pp. 167-170.