

9-30-1988

## The February Revolution, by Bernad

S.J. Cullen

Follow this and additional works at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies>

---

### Recommended Citation

Cullen, S.J. (1988) "The February Revolution, by Bernad," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*: Vol. 36: No. 3, Article 11.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.13185/2244-1638.1335>

Available at: <https://archium.ateneo.edu/phstudies/vol36/iss3/11>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Ateneo Journals at Archium Ateneo. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* by an authorized editor of Archium Ateneo.

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University · Loyola Heights, Quezon City · 1108 Philippines

---

## **The February Revolution, by Bernad**

Review Author: Vincent G. Cullen, S.J.

*Philippine Studies* vol. 36, no. 3 (1988) 395–396

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

book makes an excellent beginning. This is an important book, interesting to read, a valuable contribution to Philippine regional historiography. To the University of San Carlos in Cebu, congratulations are due for making this book available to the public.

*Miguel A. Bernad, S.J.*  
*Xavier University*

THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION AND OTHER REFLECTIONS. By Miguel A. Bernad, S.J. Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1986. 141 pages.

This small book contains the author's spiritual and cultural reflections on the occasion of visits to historical sites and the contemplation of various works of art. There are three main parts entitled Reflections in Foreign Lands, American Monuments, The Native Sky.

In the first essay, "In the Shadow of Borobudur" the author graphically describes his visit to the ancient Buddhist temple in Indonesia. The ascent of the eight terraces whose walls are decorated with bas reliefs, evokes the sense, as it was meant to, of a spiritual ascent. Near the top the walls are bare and the statues of Buddha are half hidden in small shrines or stupas. Then one comes to the top "to the great Stupa which encloses Nothingness. Nirvana" (p. 12). At the time the author sees in this empty room the difference between the concept of God according to the Christian tradition, as the Plenitude of Being, and that of the Buddhist tradition; the negation of being. After subsequent reflection and study, he concludes that the ideas are not so dissimilar, in that the Buddhist notion may actually be more "nothing- in-this-world" or "nothing-that-we-know."

The other essays in this section describe paintings in the London Art Gallery, or reflect on the Talking Crucifix of Assisi, the porcelain army buried in the grave of the Chinese Emperor Hsi Huang-ti, and some sites in Spain connected with the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

In the second part, American Monuments, the essay entitled "Neptune and the Torch" presents a comparison between the Statue of Liberty in the New York harbor as the symbol of freedom and democracy, and the Dewey Monument in San Francisco commemorating the U.S. naval victory in Manila Bay as the symbol of imperialism. It is an apt comparison and this contradiction in ideals and policies continues in the U.S. till today.

In the essay, "Among the Cherry Blossoms" the author describes the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials in Washington, D.C. in seeming contrast. He notes that while Jefferson wrote the inspired words of the Declaration of Independence, he could hardly be said to have practised them fully, as he was a wealthy man living off the labor of his slaves. As a matter of fact he was an aristocrat, as were many

signers of the Declaration. He is quoted as having said that "democracy is too important to be left in the hands of the common people." At this point, however, the author's muse nods a bit, for he doesn't balance the contrast, which is the stark statue of Abraham Lincoln, who in his life and presidency did exemplify the democratic ideal that all men are created equal.

The tone of the third section, *The Native Sky*, is didactic and historical rather than reflective, and this may be disappointing to the reader. An example of this can be seen in the essay; "Rizal and the Igorots." During the 1903 St. Louis International Exposition, Igorots from the Philippines, the women in their colorful native dress and the men in g-strings, were exhibited and this caused an uproar in the Philippines. It is interesting to note the difference between the reaction of Rizal and that of the Filipinos of 1903 as described by the author. Rizal worried that the poor Igorots would catch cold, which they did. The reaction of the Filipinos in 1903 is described by the author: "But to be publicly held up to ridicule as a nation of mountain people who wear no clothes—this was galling to Filipino self-respect. Hence the uproar" (p. 103). In short Rizal was worried about the Igorots as people. The folks of 1903 were worried that they might be associated in the minds of foreigners with their fellow Filipinos, thus demonstrating the deep-seated prejudice of many lowland "Christian" Filipinos against the mountain people with whom they might have felt proud to be associated.

A more reflective approach would have noted that this prejudice still exists today. For instance, in the late 1970s the Provincial Government of Bukidnon sponsored a *Kaamulan* or gathering of indigenous Bukidnon and Manobo in Malaybalay. For the sake of the tourists the Manobo were made to dance in g-strings down the main street. The g-string is not a part of the Manobo traditional attire. Was this not an affront to the dignity of the Manobos? Several years later the Catholic College in Malaybalay reenacted the *Ati-atihan*, the folk procession, popular in Iloilo, which caricatures the culture of the Negritos. The college boys dressed in shorts and g-strings, blackened with charcoal, and carrying spears and bolos, dragged "captured Christian maidens" through the streets of Malaybalay. It was great fun, the college students meant no harm, but it wasn't fun for the Manobo friend at my side seeing this parody of traditional culture. He didn't say anything, but just watched a while then walked away. Is what is lamentable in benighted foreigners excusable in fellow Filipinos?

The essay on the February Revolution provides the reader with a clear and concise account of what took place. It doesn't, however, match the essay, "The Tall Tree of Lamapas," in which the author describes the history of a sleepy Visayan barrio, using a tall durian tree as a symbol of the traditional barrio life that is yielding to modern mechanized culture. One day the tall tree that had towered over the village for centuries is cut down. "It would have lived for another century if it had been left alone. But it was in the way, they said. They cut it down and sawed it up into logs. There was beauty in a standing tree, but

there is money in logs" (p. 128). We might say the same for Manobo culture and the present destruction of the forests.

This small book, clearly and graphically written, deserves our attention because it may help us see what lies below the surface of our daily lives.

*Vincent G. Cullen, S.J.  
Jesuit Retreat House  
Malaybalay, Bukidnon*

TO CARE FOR THE EARTH. A CALL TO A NEW THEOLOGY. By Sean McDonagh. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986 and Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1986. xii + 224 pages.

What used to be a feeble plea by a few to moderate the use of the world's natural resources has now grown into an urgent call by all sectors of society throughout the world. Besides the environmentalists, politicians and church leaders have now joined in alerting the world to the danger of indiscriminate and wanton destruction of our natural environment.

McDonagh's *To Care for the Earth* is another addition to the growing literature on the subject. It is based on his reflections on his experience as a missionary priest trained also as a sociologist and theologian, and a witness to the unbridled denudation of the southern Philippine forests where his mission is located. Logging companies and landless peasants have been destroying vast areas of forest land, such that if the "present trend continues, all the primary forests [of the Philippines] will be gone before the year 2000" (p. 33). And, as everyone knows, once the forest cover is gone, the soil is quickly eroded, its fertility is exhausted, and ordinary rains inevitably lead to flooding.

Though by no means exhaustive, McDonagh presents enough evidence and statistical data to make a good case for his concern. Modern industry, pesticides, and artificial fertilizers produced by the modern chemical industry, all in the name of agricultural growth, are the main pollutants of our rivers and seas, threatening, and in places, destroying useful marine life. The situation today, the author writes, is "similar to that of a man who is so preoccupied with his need for firewood and is so impressed with the power-saw in his hand that instead of just cutting a branch, he is sawing down a tree which is tilted in his direction" (p. 61). How explain this myopic attitude?

Following the opinion of an expert in Teilhardian thought, McDonagh suggests that "modern western people have lost a meaningful sense of identity" (p. 61). Men today do not seem to know who they are, what their purpose and role in life is, etc. They have become, in other words, incapable of reaching beyond themselves, incapable of that transcendence which distinguishes human from