

Dr Jose Rizal in retrospective as inspirator for ASEAN

Address by Professor Sir Olaf baron van Boetzelaer, Pursuivant in the board of the Order of the Knights of Rizal of The Hague Chapter, held on December 27th, Rizal Day, at the Philippine Embassy in The Hague, The Netherlands

Your Excellency Ambassador Sir Victor Ledda and brother knight, thank you for your hospitality, Sir Anton Lutter, Commander of the Hague chapter of the Order of the Knights of Rizal, esteemed audience, ladies and gentlemen,

2017 will be a special year:

The commemoration of 50 years of ASEAN, under the chairmanship of the Republic of the Philippines.

We can pose the following questions: is it fruitful, inspiring to reflect about the ideas of Dr. Jose Rizal, In relation to the opinions of the Philippine diplomacy on its chairmanship about ASEAN in 2017?

Can reflection on Dr. Rizal in retrospective, be inspiring with regards to ASEAN's future. Indeed the past is sometimes the key to the future. In Dr. Rizal's perception is central his aspiration for the freedom of the person, his concern for the person's dignity and his an alienable rights. And it is here also fits in exactly the message of the Philippine diplomacy, mentioning "a people and oriented and centered ASEAN".

In fact was the endeavor of Rizal, the intellectual, the writer and the activist, his fight for the promotion of the freedom and emancipation of his Philippine country men. Being very critical as he was concerning the Spanish rule and the conduct of the Spanish friars. So the message of the Philippine diplomacy on ASEAN is no other than the message of the national hero, about what we call today "human rights". And that in the historical time of colonialism.

For example , present day Indonesia, was centuries long ruled by the Dutch under the name of Dutch East Indies. So the Philippines and the Kingdom of the Netherlands to which present day Indonesia belonged were neighbors in colonial times. Even the Philippines and the Netherlands, the Low Countries , "shared" once a common "head of state". No other than King Philippe the Second of Spain, both our countries being ruled by Spain. We, the Dutch fought the "80 Years war of liberation" against Spain, from 1568 to 1648. But the Spaniards stayed much longer to be exactly till 1897 when was held in Paris the conference between Spain and the United States.

Back to Rizal.

In the soul of Rizal were always the patriot and the cosmopolitan as complimentary characteristics. So as the Philippine diplomacy on the eve of his chairmanship proclaims: "peace and stability in the region" it is also in line with the spirit of Rizal, wishing that for his countrymen. Let us hope that the "Declaration of Conduct concerning the South China Sea " by ASEAN, lead to appropriate attitudes and behavior of the concerned sea faring nations.

Also Dr. Rizal saw the place of his fatherland within its regional context and sphere but not exclusively. This in line with the viewpoint of Philippine diplomacy to further “maritime security and cooperation”, also in accordance with the ASEAN “Declaration against natural disasters”.

The Philippines aspires for ASEAN to develop a model of regionalism, even a role of global player. In Dr. Rizal’s perception, the Philippines were also of course part of the global family of nations. A fitting conception for the “homo universalis”, a patriot and in the same time being open to the world. Certainly to the European nations with their heterogeneous civilization. Great linguist as he also was.

Dr. Rizal was a believer in the Christian values but as an authentic Catholic his criticism of the Spanish friars bore strong resemblance to the criticism of our Lord about the hypocrisy of the pharisees in His time.

So let he be an example. Also with the Civilistic Appeal Movement I founded, I trust not to be too far from Dr. Jose Rizal’s Ideals.