



# Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination

By Benedict Anderson

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In this sparkling new work, Benedict Anderson provides a radical recasting of themes from *Imagined Communities*, his classic book on nationalism, through an exploration of fin-de-siecle politics and culture that spans the Caribbean, Imperial Europe and the South China Sea.

A jewelled pomegranate packed with nitroglycerine is primed to blow away Manila's 19th-century colonial elite at the climax of *El Filibusterismo*, whose author, the great political novelist Jose Rizal, was executed in 1896 by the Spanish authorities in the Philippines at the age of 35. Anderson explores the impact of avant-garde European literature and politics on Rizal and his contemporary, the pioneering folklorist Isabelo de los Reyes, who was imprisoned in Manila after the violent uprisings of 1896 and later incarcerated, together with Catalan anarchists, in the prison fortress of Montjuich in Barcelona. On his return to the Philippines, by now under American occupation, Isabelo formed the first militant trade unions under the influence of Malatesta and Bakunin.

Anderson considers the complex intellectual interactions of these young Filipinos with the new "science" of anthropology in Germany and Austro-Hungary, and with post-Communard experimentalists in Paris, against a background of militant anarchism in Spain, France, Italy and the Americas, Jose Marti's armed uprising in Cuba and anti-imperialist protests in China and Japan. In doing so, he depicts the dense intertwining of anarchist internationalism and radical anti-colonialism.

*Under Three Flags* is a brilliantly original work on the explosive history of national independence and global politics.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This unique study weaves together the erotic obsessions of avant-garde French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans, the execution of a Filipino writer and activist, a Cuban insurrection, the assassination of President McKinley and the Dreyfus Affair in an exploration of links between the international anarchist movement of the 19th century and nascent Filipino nationalism. Cornell scholar Anderson presents his case with the zeal of a researcher uncovering hidden history, referencing an impressive range of sources in multiple languages (Tagalog, Spanish, French, German) and anchoring his study in the life stories of early Filipino patriots José Rizal and Isabela de los Reyes. The volume provides fascinating insights into the global flow of anarchic and anti-colonial ideas, though some of the links the author describes, such as that between Rizal, Huysmans and other European anarchists, remain tenuous and speculative, and he freely admits that his evidence is at times "circumstantial." Unlike the author's *Imagined Communities* (1983), which moved beyond the examination of specific national movements to put forward a provocative theory on the nature of nationalism itself, this volume, for all its geographical sweep, never addresses such universal concerns. Though the introduction states that this interplay of anarchy and global hegemony contains "a number of parallels and resonances with our own time," there's little analysis of the ways in which the tumultuous period under review might illuminate the current state of world politics. Students of anarchism and anti-colonialism will find a thought-provoking, informative study, but non-specialists will be left hoping for more far-reaching conclusions.

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### Review

"Anderson is a rare bird: a learned Cornell professor who writes about international politics with subversive elegance and a philosopher's flair for first principles."—*Boston Globe* (in praise of *The Spectre of Comparisons*)

### About the Author

**Benedict Anderson** is Aaron L. Binenkorp Professor of International Studies Emeritus at Cornell University. He is editor of the journal *Indonesia* and author of *Java in a Time of Revolution*, *The Spectre of Comparisons: Nationalism, Southeast Asia, and the World* and *Imagined Communities*.

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