

OPINION & FEATURES

Beyond foreign aid

DONORLAND is not Disneyland. This is according to Koos Richelle, director general of the EuropeAid Cooperation Office of the European Commission. Richelle addressed the opening of the Asia-Europe Meeting or ASEM conference last April 19 in Makati, which aims to promote better understanding and deeper cooperation between the two regions amid the global economic downturn.

Like other aid donors, the Europeans want to make sure their development aid is properly utilized. EuropeAid, whose assistance is also geared toward the achievement of Millennium Development Goals, is committed to providing bigger aid to countries in need by 2015. But this means that EC members and European taxpayers will increasingly want to see tangible results of their aid, Koos told the ASEM conference. Foreign aid alone has never been enough to lift any country from poverty, he pointed out. For sustainable development, Koos said foreign aid must be backed by "quality leadership" and governance.

Filipinos can only agree. Though the country has been a major recipient of aid from the international donor community for many years, poverty alleviation has progressed at a slow

GUEST EDITORIAL

pace. Worse, foreign-funded projects and official development assistance have become mired in corruption scandals. The latest involved road projects financed by the World Bank, which debarred seven contractors, three of them Philippine companies, for rigging the bidding for the project. Before this there was the corruption scandal, still unresolved, involving the broadband network deal between the government and China's ZTE Corp., whose funding was supposed to be sourced from Chinese ODA.

The ZTE mess is an example of what happens when foreign aid donors do not seek some form of accountability from aid recipients in the utilization of ODA. Tacking on such rules, and reminding recipient countries of the limits of foreign aid, could help bring about good governance. (*Philstar.com*)



Photo courtesy of Philstar.com

Remembering Bataan

IF you know that tomorrow the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse would come to sow desolation, famine and death over the land, you would be thrown into sudden panic and turmoil. Every man, in feverish hurry, would do whatever on the spur of the moment seems to enable him and his dear ones to escape the impending peril. Were it a certainty that within twenty-four hours, our Country would be invaded by some rapacious foreign power, or maltreated by some local power, threatening to wreck your homes and destroy all that you and yours stand for, that knowledge would galvanize the entire nation into instant action, determined, strenuous and total, but perhaps futile because of unpreparedness, to repel the aggression. You wished we had more time.

The picture is not mere fantasy. Its possibility of realization is inexact only in one point: in that it will not take place tomorrow; and that we do have to pray for time for we have it; in that we may avert the catastrophe if we now organize all the resources of the nation, natural and human, all her forces, economic and intellectual, to meet the oncoming dangers. But we have to act now, and that means every Filipino citizen, man and woman. Our efforts and labor must be coordinated in accordance with a careful and comprehensive plan.

Let us take warning from the fate of nations that only in the last few months have been overtaken by horrible tragedies. Our strength lies in our people, our resources, in the building up of a solid national economy, and in an intense, all pervading love of

AS A MATTER OF FACT

Sara Soliven De Guzman

country that should make every one of us ready to render service, to undergo any hardship or sacrifice, in order to achieve our national security and salvation. But our downfall is the greed, arrogance and spoils of public office. Madame President, isn't there any hope left for you to change the way this government is run? Will you continue to allow this country and its people to be exploited and humiliated unprotected by the fools who strut in public office?

In this generation of epicureanism and self-indulgence, where men and women have grown soft and society has gone mad, it's important to remember that once there was a time when the best and the brightest of Filipinos rallied to the flag, fought valiantly for a cause, endured hardship and hunger, and the frustration and humiliation of defeat, a bone-grinding Death March, and months of captivity in a hell-hole of a prison camp into which the flower of our manhood marched, and after cruel months, those who survived, skeletons of themselves, limped out again.

Bataan Day, which was ignored, should prick the conscience of both Filipinos and Americans. We have a tendency to sweep this three-month ordeal on the doomed Bataan peninsula under the rug. April 9, 1942 was the day our colors were furled in surrender and a "defeated army" began its cruel death march into captivity. Seventy-five thousand Filipinos and American soldiers captured by the Japanese forces marched from Bataan to Camp O'Donnell, the biggest prisoner-of-war (POW) camp in the Philippines, located in Capas, Tarlac.

And in the jungles and foxholes of Bataan, we lost many of the best and the brightest (and surely the bravest) of an entire generation.

Let us not forget how our countrymen fought together and stood the ground during those days. They fought beyond the limits of human endurance—sick and starving, disappointed by the betrayal of American promises of a seven-mile "relief convoy," deserted by their leader General Douglas MacArthur (who fled, on orders from Washington to organize the defense of Australia)—Filipinos fired off their last bullets, tightened their ragged belts, determined to die in the defense (not of the American flag but of their homeland).

My late father, Maximo V. Soliven once wrote, "Those who sprout rhetoric about nationalism have no idea of the true national pride the Filipinos, from leader to *masa*, of the Bataan generation carried in their hearts, it was bred all the way into the marrow of their bones. The American generals, in fact, were the ones who waved the white flag of surrender in Bataan—not one Filipino general or officer concurred. They wept almost to a man at being deprived of the honor of making a last stand. And when the arrogant Japanese conquerors slapped them, hit them with rifle butts, and killed so many of our boys with bayonet and bullet during that march to Tarlac under the burning April sun, forbidding them to even drink from the fetid and noxious waters of the roadside ditches under pain of death, we lost more men during that period of agony than on the battlefield. At least, clothed in its rags of glory this dying and disease stricken army still managed to hold its head high."

I wish we could restore to the dead of Bataan, the Death March and Capas, Tarlac, at least a small measure of honor and gratitude that they deserve. It was a shining hour in which courage was the

mean, and not the exception. The weary collapse of that exhausted army was no shame. The shame, for our years of churlish neglect, belongs to us.

Here is a poem my father wrote in his youth that reminds us of this day:

The man of Bataan—I shall see them as I have always seen them

A ragged processional of gaunt, grim, and ghostly men

Marching from a field that slept; No longer underneath their stars and stripes,

But under the blood-red banners of an alien conqueror that had come

Like shadows in the night, to thrust the bayonet of treachery into the side of good

I shall see them as they marched side by side, triumphant in their agony;

For freedom did not falter with their falling, but lives,

Brighter for their sacrifice, in the hearts of men.

I shall remember them... Defenders of a broken soil, grasping valiantly, hopelessly,

The sharp "kampilan" of their fathers.

I shall remember them, as my children shall remember them

A ragged army marching from a ragged battlefield

That they had held with valor and with pride until the end.

A ragged army tramping to the jeers of enemies,

A wasted troop that would not surrender a wasted field!

Let the crosses upon crosses rising rank on rank be the only monumentals

We raise unto their memory.

Someday, the spirit of Bataan may be rekindled in our hearts—but alas, it seems—not yet. (*Philstar.com*)

The Failon incident

IDO not know Ted Failon. In the interest of full disclosure, I am a producer for the ABS-CBN News Channel, although I have never personally met the *TV Patrol* anchor.

I write this as someone who was riding home in a taxicab listening to reporters talk about evidence and paraffin tests and an investigation of "the incident" at Ted Failon's house, not knowing what the incident was.

And even with affidavits and front-page articles and news stories across all platforms, like the fruit vendors in Antipolo and tricycle drivers in Panay who I heard engaged in vicious debate, I still do not know exactly what happened on April 15th, and will not attempt to hazard a guess on whether "the incident" was suicide or foul play.

The story is delicious, dramatic, the delight of every newsroom—with the exception, of course, of the one Failon belongs to.

It becomes, as it is retold in cafés and cafeterias across the country, the stuff of soap operas, the sort that triggers the national imagination: blood, tears, a woman wronged, an erstwhile king who falls from his throne. It was Failon who shot her, said many who shook their heads sadly. The outspoken, no-holds-barred newscaster is now on the other side of the law – see how he likes it.

I will say I was not surprised when lawyer Persida Acosta suddenly appeared on scene, wagging a righteous finger against the police.

The Public Attorney's Office is meant to offer aid to indigents who cannot afford legal services. There are hundreds of thousands, both innocent and guilty, who have been tossed into the cramped jails of this country without the benefit of competent representation.

The PAO is only one body with limited resources, it cannot reasonably be expected to stand for all those who by circumstance or choice are caught on the wrong side of the law.

And yet the good PAO chief Acosta gets a call from Failon partner

Korina Sanchez, and races to be interviewed on dzMM to defend Failon on national radio, and went so far as to aid Failon in leaving the Quezon City police station in the midst of an investigation Thursday, April 17, to visit his wife.

METHOD OF MADNESS

Patricia Evangelista

Failon may have been the victim of police harassment, which Commission on Human Rights Chair Leila de Lima pointed out, but it is no reason for Acosta to take the opportunity to dance in the spotlight for a man who, unlike many Filipinos, has the means and the intelligence to protect himself with able representation. Perhaps indigent cases are not heard under klieg lights.

Public sympathy may not have been on the side of Failon when the incident was reported, but it is with him now, as he becomes the unlikely victim of police brutality. Many may have been interested in the story of the big man brought down by his own sins, but what happened after resonates more.

These are, after all, the same policemen who drag bleeding suspects out of parked cars to execute them on a crowded highway. They are the men who complain about the unfairness of filmmakers and television directors for portraying badly men in uniform, and who are demanding to be portrayed better to "up our public ratings."

They are the same good gentlemen who were mugging for the camera as Failon stood in his home on April 15th. After all, it was Failon who for years railed against police brutality, who was hard-line and at times heartless in denouncing politicians and policemen.

When the men behind the badge dragged Trina Etong's sister Pamela screaming out of the New Era General Hospital, a short while before Trina breathed her last, they made Failon the victim.

This is what Kaye Etong, Failon's daughter said while sitting in the ABS-CBN newsroom last Thursday, April 17 to the police: My

mother killed herself. She ended her life and died alone. My aunt and uncle were hauled off to jail. My father is being accused, and is attempting to bring our jailed helpers and relatives together to be with my mother.

The police are hounding us. I am here, on national television, announcing that I believe my mother chose to leave us and die. Now, is there anything else you want to put us through?

Understand that this is what that admission means: that one girl has been pushed to a corner to a point that she is announcing to the public that this woman, the mother who gave birth to her, who was supposed to love her and cherish her and stand by her, has chosen instead to die, knowing the consequences to the two daughters left motherless and guilt-stricken.

Policemen ordered the warrantless arrests of the driver, the helpers and even the in-laws of Failon. They were asked for warrants, they claimed they needed none, "because we're already here."

Article 3 Section 12 of the Constitution requires the reading of the Miranda upon arrest, a concept foreign to many members of the police. Presidential Decree 1829, Penalizing Obstruction of Apprehension of Criminal Offenders, was a martial law decree, one that human rights lawyer Theodore Te says does not cover the Failon case.

Nobody brought up this law when the government protected Romulo Neri from interrogation, and the police were quiet when asked why they were carefully pretending to investigate the various crimes being charged to the military.

Police officials admitted that arrests were made, repeatedly said Failon was being treated the same as any other person charged with a crime, and yet instigated a "manhunt" when Failon left for the hospital.

In a country where Lady Justice keeps one eye open, the question then is this: if it can happen to Ted Failon, it can happen to us. If Ted Failon pulled the trigger of the gun that cost Trina Etong her life, then this would be a case where the country would side with a murderer because they would believe him more than the police. (*Inquirer.net*)



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