

# OPINION & FEATURES



Photo courtesy of Philstar.com

## Beyond foreign aid

**D**ONORLAND 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

### GUEST EDITORIAL

slow 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)

## Mischievous Arroyo speechwriter

**G**LORIA Macapagal Arroyo’s speechwriters are either insanely mischievous or they dislike their boss. They’re putting words in her mouth that could get her into real trouble.

Consider the Easter Message that they ghost wrote for her:

“Today, Easter Sunday, with the rest of the Church and Christendom, we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord. Our hearts sing out: ‘Rising, you restored our life; O Jesus, come again in glory!’ This is the central truth of our faith and the subject of every Eucharistic celebration.

“On this day two thousand years ago, our Savior, by His resurrection, proved the truth of His love for us. In our lives as Christians, we too must prove our love for the truth in His life and His teachings. We must love each other and risk our all for the truth, because God commands us so; and Christ did no less for us and expected no less from us.

“We, who were consigned only to death, have now been reborn in the promise of heavenly life. We, who knew only darkness, are now asked to become children of the light because, as St. Paul reminds us, ‘the fruit of the light is in

all goodness and justice and truth.’

“Hallelujah, thanks be to God!”

The first part of the message is okay. They simply lifted most of that from Church liturgy. But check out the second paragraph. Those mischievous speechwriters actually fed her these self-incriminating lines:

“In our lives as Christians, we too must prove our love for the truth in His life and His teachings. We must love each other and risk our all for the truth, because God commands us so...”

Did you get that?

Those naughty speechwriters would like Arroyo to risk her seat in Malacañang by telling the truth. And they’re reminding her that God commands her to do so.

They even had the gall to remind her that, like Saul, who had his encounter with the Lord on the road to Damascus and was transformed into St. Paul, Arroyo can “become (one of the) children of the light” after knowing “only darkness”—meaning, the darkness of lies.

*Salbahe talaga.* Imagine—making their boss like the fish who gets caught



**STREET TALK**  
Greg B. Macabenta

in the mouth!

I saw the editorial of a leading daily asking Arroyo if she would do exactly as her Easter message would have other people do. The editorial then enumerated all of the things that have been begging for years for the truth to come out, except that it had consistently been foiled by claims

of executive privilege, disappearing witnesses, public officials with amnesia and others faithfully observing the Code of Omerta.

Come on guys, that’s being naïve. Why would Arroyo make it so easy for you and for the rest of the country by voluntarily telling the truth, just because some malicious speechwriters slipped those incriminating words into her Easter Sunday message?

Do you think she’d actually do that? Not on your life.

But, if I were a member of the presidential security team, I would keep an eye on those speechwriters. You can almost hear them cackling in their cubicles:

“He he he he....Guess what I slipped into her Easter Message today!”

“You didn’t, you naughty, naughty saboteur, you!!! You’re practically asking her to incriminate herself! He he he he!”

It’s dead lier than spiking her drink or lacing her meal with arsenic.

Now, what will those speechwriting saboteurs think of next? Slip words into her speech where she orders the lifting of executive privilege, authorizes Romulo “Never Talk” Neri to confess, and prods Joc-Joc Bolante to spill the beans on the agricultural fund heist?

And then what? Deliver a speech laced with admissions about extra-judicial killings, the Garci conversations and the backroom dealings that led to the expulsion of Erap Estrada?

Presidential speechwriters have been known to get their bosses into trouble. Even in the USA. Many years ago, Pres. George Bush the Elder found himself delivering a speech about drug pushers plying their trade across the street from the White House. This was in the course of a campaign that he launched against the drug menace.

As it turned out, the speechwriters had arranged to plant drug pushers where

the speech had said they were plying their trade—but they did this after they had written the speech. In other words, what was said in the speech was pure fabrication.

Poor George Bush, he didn’t know that. But the Washington Post, through private channels, got wind of the truth and exposed it. Boy, was the president’s face red!

Because of what happened, I wrote a piece in this corner, twitting the speech writer of then Pres. Cory Aquino who often boasted that he would dash off a speech and then hand it to the president while she was on her way to a speaking engagement.

Now come these speechwriters of Gloria Arroyo, making her say words that she simply can’t mean, because that would get her into trouble.

On the other hand, it’s also possible that the speechwriters didn’t surreptitiously slip in the incriminating language into the Easter Sunday speech but that Arroyo herself had given instructions to use that exact combination of words.

In such a case, Arroyo must have already lost her marbles—or she must think we’re a bunch of nincompoops. (gregmacabenta@hotmail.com)

## One man’s life in politics

**H**IS was a political career so filled with ups and downs, glory and betrayal, victory and defeat that it could serve as an object lesson on the perils of public service.

And yet the biggest lesson that the late Emmanuel Pelaez learned was taught him late in life, at a time when most everyone had written him off as a relevant political player.

It was 1982 and Pelaez was in the middle of a virtually one-man campaign against the coconut levy. On July 21, he was on his way home after a busy day filled with engagements when a car suddenly overtook him and his driver and cut them off. Armed men jumped out of the other car and Pelaez instinctively dove to the floor space behind his driver. The men moved in closer, firing into the car and opening the driver’s door, dragging out the apparently fatally wounded Arsenio Rogero, while others continued to fire into the passenger side. “He felt some bullets go into his body but was too scared to scream. He kept silent and played dead until he heard the attackers’ car speeding away.”

Pelaez bore six gunshot wounds, none of them fatal. As he was being wheeled into the operating room, Pelaez saw his friend, Gen. Tomas Karingal, station commander of Quezon City, and “the question breathlessly rushed forth from my lips,”

he recalled. The question: “What is happening to our country, General?” would encapsulate the citizenry’s fear and bewilderment at a time when the country seemed to be in the unbreakable grip of Marcosian martial law. The fear and bewilderment would give way to anger and action just two years later, when Ninoy Aquino’s assassination goaded the populace into declaring: *Hindi ka nag-iisa!* (You are not alone!).

But for Pelaez, who had begun his foray into politics so full of promise and idealism, the ambush was a wake-up call. Previously consumed with a passion for public service, energized by the wheeling-and-dealing among power brokers, Pelaez turned into—in the words of his biographer Nelson Navarro—“a passionate and tireless advocate of peaceful change and national reconciliation.”

Before the ambush, Pelaez had been moving out of the shadow of what was perhaps his darkest moment: when he lost the presidential nomination of the Nacionalista Party to the upstart Ferdinand Marcos, a recent turncoat from the Liberal Party, who had waged a dirty campaign by buying delegate votes. This, despite a “gentleman’s agreement” he entered into with Pelaez. When egged on by his advisers to match Marcos peso for peso, Pelaez uttered a statement that has lived on as either the height of integrity and idealism, or of naivete and stubbornness. “I would rather be right than be President,” Pelaez famously said, and he went down in abysmal defeat.

This was a stunning blow to someone who had seemed to many to be the “golden boy” of Philippine

politics. Handsome and urbane, articulate in his native Visayan, English and even Spanish, he came to dominate politics in his native Misamis Oriental and even the entire Mindanao. He became the youngest member, at age 38, of the Philippine Senate, and was one of the closest advisers of President Ramon Magsaysay, so trusted that he was dubbed the “heir apparent” of The Guy. He served as vice president of President Diosdado Macapagal but publicly and pointedly broke with Macapagal when he was maliciously implicated in the Stonehill scandal, protesting that the President had “borrowed his honor.”

Despite all these setbacks, chronicled so entertainingly and in great detail by Navarro in the book “*What’s Happening to Our Country*,” Pelaez would move on to devote more years of service to his country. After the victory of Cory Aquino, he was appointed ambassador to the United States, playing a crucial role in the negotiations over the US Bases in the Philippines, recalling the role he played during the Magsaysay administration.

Ernie Pelaez, son of the statesman and chair of the Emmanuel Pelaez Foundation, speaking at the book launch earlier this month, said that some people say his father’s idealism and principled stand at the Nacionalista Convention caused him to abandon an ambition he had nurtured for over a decade. “Perhaps he was being a dreamer. But that was our father. He always believed in the good in people and its power to overcome their baser instincts ... Only when one believes in the good in people can one strive for programs and projects to drive genuine

reform in the political and social arenas.”

And this spirit, of loyalty, principled service and idealism, Pelaez’s family—his wife Edith and their nine children—plan to perpetuate by way of the Emmanuel Pelaez Leadership and Campaign Program.

Proceeds from sales of the book will go to fund the program, undertaken with the Ateneo School of Government, which will be a four-day workshop for candidates in 2010 who are seeking local government posts in Mindanao.

“By inspiring local candidates to commit to reform-oriented leadership and good governance, we hope to build a critical mass of change agents in government,” said Ernie.

The program, he added, hopes to “piece together a road map to win the elections, and more importantly, to craft an effective program of government thereafter.”

Perhaps they should also teach—if it is at all possible—emotional stamina and strength of will and spirit, to keep focused on the process of change despite all the heartaches that are sure to follow. A reading of Pelaez’s biography will provide more than enough thrills and horrors to the student of history and politics. What those who wish to follow in his footsteps must learn is how to weather the ups and the downs, without losing one’s footing or straying in another direction.

(For book inquiries, please contact (650) 544-6591 if you are in the US or (63)918906-8142 if you are in Manila. You may also e-mail: info@epelaezfoundation.com (Inquirer.net)



**AT LARGE**  
Rina Jimenez-David

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