

An Epilogue of the Article, [A Pragmatic Look at the Present Political Crisis in the Philippines](#) (Concluding Part)

I
t's not just that many of those on top are corrupt. It goes all the way down, where almost everything in the grassroots is now "corruptible". In Tanay during the last election, it was a circus: with both candidates buying votes right and left, but technically, it wasn't "buying" because each barangay captain or leader was given a cash outlay by the candidates to "reward" those who voted/ or supported them. Many of the people waited for the offer. I am sure this is not unique to the area. We followed most of the rallies of both sides and were amused at the style of campaigning, not too far from what we hear in the present senate hearings with innuendos, personal attacks, etc. The crowd loved it (in a similar manner that many keep being glued to the TV despite the nauseous hearings). One speaker exhorted the voters to collect the bribe money yet vote based on one's conscience, as at least, the "stolen" money would go back to the people – corruption priming the local economy? The homilies in church were often blatantly political. The one consolation was that unlike other areas, politics here was safe: No terrorism, no killings, etc. But the more interesting aspect was the "betting" on who would win. Third parties, including banks, held the money wagered by both sides, with a service charge. Since we couldn't vote, and were indeed caught in the election fever, we made a bet, and actually won 10 grand. There were those who reportedly bet hundreds of thousands.

Yes, if indeed what we have experienced is a microcosm of what is out there, politics in the Philippines now is a circus, a sport, like in a cockpit, with all its commercialism and gimmicks and paybacks. Where is the sacred right and responsibility of suffrage? Whom should we blame more, those who elect, or those who get elected? It is a vicious circle.

Is democracy, the supposed rule of the majority, really a solution for an intelligent, just representation of the greatest good for the greatest number? Erap was elected by the majority, the "masa", and no one will deny that it was a disaster. I really doubt that Fernando Poe, Jr., did win against GMA, but even if he did, was the squelching of the "Hello-Garci" case (that there was massive cheating and FPJ should have been the President) -- and its dying a natural death -- a tacit admission from the middle class that some cheating was tolerable so that FPJ would not be President? Can you imagine déjà vu all over again, with perhaps Dolphy sitting in some high government position? On the other hand, look at the US with its electoral votes. Is it truly representative? We all know those controversies about Bush stealing both elections.

Politics in the Philippines now is a circus, a sport, like in a cockpit, with all its commercialism and gimmicks and paybacks. Now, the church seems to be spearheading all these rallies against President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo (GMA). And I hear Pampanga's Governor Fr. Panlilio is talking about tackling the presidency. Why add more to the circus? If this plan goes to fruition, shall we end up as some sort of theocracy, with the powers that be handing out fatwas to those who practice birth control or use condoms for safe sex? Many in the church can't even

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distinguish between birth control and the abhorrent abortion, how much more can they run the country. Even now, in our microcosm, those on the pulpit who were so self righteous before are under a cloud of suspicion. Among other things, they seem to have gone the same way as politicians: not listening to the congregation, starting up church reconstruction projects that are totally absurd, with favored contractors based on nepotism, etc.

The responses from my previous post were generally positive, i.e., they mostly agreed in principle that we should not change horses in midstream, as it would be changing one set of crooks with another set. But all condemned corruption, and I must clarify that my stand on pragmatism does not imply condoning corruption. Rather, we should not be quick to judge absolutely from a stand point of moral superiority, but look at all aspects and try to understand the present situation, and pragmatically draw our course of action.

Another misunderstanding was that I claimed that is no poverty in the Philippines. Quite the contrary, there is. What I said what there is no visible "abject" poverty in the provinces, and here I must qualify that this is from what I have seen so far in our province. I am sure we are much better off then say the teeming squalor in Calcutta, Darfur, etc. So with that, somebody else posited that since everything is relative, should we compare ourselves with the best countries in the world, or the worst. What do you think?

But as many of the other rejoinders pointed out, it takes time for a nation and its people to mature into a responsible, working social order. We might have our ups and downs, but personally, I am optimistic that we still are slowly improving and one day in the future, we will get there.

Do all of these ruminations bother me? No. # # #

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