

Part Six of a Series, [A People Caught in Its Own Dung](#)

By Ado Paglinawan

Columnist Antonio C. Abaya wrote that “the deluge from tropical storm Ondoy that sank a reported 80 percent of Metro Manila and continues to keep underwater most of the lakeshore towns around Laguna de Bay has spurred a search for a solution to what promises to become a yearly urban nightmare.”

The columnist of the *Philippine Standard*, however, added that “some of the solutions proffered on the ridiculous” starting with the alternative created by the Aquino administration replacing the Parañaque Spillway – “a concrete wall around the entire lake, which will serve as both an anti-flooding dike and a perimeter highway, and a tourist attraction.”

He said the lake would then be drained of its water, its bottom scraped and cleaned – “like a giant wok?” – and the aquifer beneath tapped to gush forth fresh water.

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

“Such a monstrosity would take at least five years to build. The proponent did not say how the lake's thousands of fishermen would be able to access the lake for their livelihood after that Berlin Wall is built. If there will be gaps for the passage of fishermen, then the seasonal rains would rush down through these gaps in search of the lowest point, the lake, and would likely demolish major segments of the Wall.

“The lake would never be drained of its dirty water and the proponent would be spending billions of pesos in taxpayers' money patching up the demolished segments of the Wall, like a modern Sisyphus pushing up a mountain a huge boulder that keeps rolling down.

“The proponent also does not tell us where the waters from the Marikina, San Mateo Umiray and other rivers are supposed to flow, or what 15-million residents of Metro Manila and lakeshore towns will use for drinking water, while Sisyphus is trying to drain the lake.

“Laguna de Bay could end up an immense ecological disaster, like the Aral Sea in Central Asia after the Soviets diverted the rivers flowing into it to irrigate the cotton fields of Uzbekistan (or was it Kazakhstan ?) in the 1980s.”

**Editor's Note:** To read another column of Mr. Abaya about the recent natural disasters in

Metropolitan Manila and the surrounding provinces, please click on this link,

[The "Bahay Kubo" Mentality and Government Neglect, If Not Stupidity and Cluelessness, Are to Blame for Storm-caused Deaths and Destruction](#)

### **More Opposition to the Ring-road Dike Project**

Non-government organizations (NGOs) and stakeholders have also opposed the ring-road dike as early as its conceptual stage. Yet finally in 2001 the government under Gloria Macapagal Arroyo decided to go ahead started its construction without consultations and a clear survey of the affected people, and in the process, destroyed massive hectares of farmlands.

In June of that same year, an NGO calling themselves "Tricorps Group" composed of COPE Foundation, CO-Multiversity and Urban Poor Associates, sent an investigate team to start the social investigation in the affected areas. Two major areas were identified as the most affected the *Lupang Arienda* in Taytay, and the coastal barangays in Taguig.

The *Philippine Standard* columnist adds that "some of the solutions proffered on the ridiculous"

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

starting with the alternative created by the Aquino administration replacing the Parañaque Spillway – “a concrete wall around the entire lake, which will serve as both an anti-flooding dike and a perimeter highway, and a tourist attraction.”

As two other groups, the *Taytay Laban sa Lakeshore Dike* (TLLD) and the *Pasig Laban sa Lakeshore Dike*

(PLLD) were already operating in the

*Lupang Arienda*

. So Tricorps focused in Taguig and assisted the organizations there to form the

*Taguig Coalition Against Dike*

(TACAD).

A tactical alliance was forged among TLLD, PLLD and TACAD. The major issues raised were the massive dislocation of houses, the livelihood of the fishermen and farmers, the ecological damage to the Lake, the defective design, and to begin with serious doubts the dike as the real solution to the floods.

On November 7, 2001, a big mobilization of affected communities to the local office of the Department of Public Works and Highways stopped the construction of the project and ordered a new environmental study. But four months after, in February 2002, the government's Office of Development Assistance office disregarded its own recommendation for additional studies and cleared the resumption of the construction of the road dike.

But in April 2002, a Lake-wide convention attended by hundreds of representatives of people's organizations took place. This was followed by a massive vigil rally in front of the Japanese Embassy.

### **The Problem Goes to Tokyo and Seoul**

The problem metastasized to Tokyo. Japanese NGOs lobbied with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation in Japan and the bank declared it was amenable to having a new environmental study and a moratorium to the construction of the project.

The problem metastasized further to Seoul. In the same month Korean NGO's conducted their own fact-finding mission on the project with the help of the Leaders and Organizers of Community Organization in Asia (LOCOA). Its report also called on the government and project donors to conduct a new EIA and to hold the project in abeyance until the final results come out.

So much for Cory Aquino's model. Frankly I do not need any more intellectual study and fact-finding brouhaha to make me conclude that the ring-road dike is a dangerous air castle. If a road is to be made, then an elevated causeway will be a better solution, but to use it for flood control is too adventurous an idea.

The hundreds who died as an aftermath of Typhoon Ondoy can no longer tell their tales but hundreds of thousands of families who survived but lost relatives in the flood and who incurred tens of billions of pesos in property damage now know that a ring-road dike around Laguna Lake will not work when the flood tops even the regulation 14-foot embankment if completed.

Why? Paraphrasing Tony Abaya's observation, the simple question is where will the water exhaust to after you gather it in Laguna Lake? So everything goes back to the urgency of the idea of a spillway.

The floodline in Marikina and Cainta is 17 feet. If there is no spillway or exhaust system, under the principle that water seeks its own level, the flood will just find a way to seep back to Marikina and Cainta, without a ring dike as what Typhoon Ondoy illustrated, or with the ring dike as the Cory Aquino's Department of Public Works and Highway has proposed.

### **Another Viable Alternative**

There is another alternative. Daniel Bautista, the proponent, is the operations chief of a company called Northbay Constructions Services Inc. His project was first presented in the

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

mid-1980s when his father was consultant to the DPWH under then Secretary Jesus Hipolito. He calls the project Storm Management and Road Tunnel, or SMART.

But Mr. Abaya would not call it "smart" giving his reasons: "The project aims to build its tunnel under Sucat Road which will presumably start near the Meralco Sucat Plant and presumably connect with the Parañaque River near the Parañaque church in Barrio La Huerta, the diverted flood waters emptying near the Chinese temple on the Coastal Road

It is a two-level tunnel that will drain off excess water from Laguna de Bay to Manila Bay, preventing the flooding of lakeshore towns, with a six lane highway on top of the tunnel for motor vehicles, three lanes going westward towards Manila Bay, three lanes for vehicles going eastward towards Laguna de Bay.

Mr. Abaya said this tunnel is huge as in the magnitude of the Cross Harbor Tunnel in Hong Kong or the Channel Tunnel between France and England but it does not make any sense.

## Tony Abaya Calls Cory Aquino's Ring Dike Ridiculous and Presents Alternatives - MabuhayRadio

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

He is familiar with the starting point of this tunnel Barrio Buli near the Meralco Sucat power plant where in the 1980s he operated a 20-hectare fish pen almost directly in front of the plant.

He said that building a tunnel 50 meters below the surface of Sucat Road is not feasible as digging a trench or gorge this deep in such a heavily built-up and heavily populated area would cause disruption to traffic flow and commerce that would be catastrophic.

Tony Abaya recalls the wisdom of a Parañaque Spillway but presents a curious alternative. Instead the floodwaters flowing westward to the Manila Bay through Parañaque, he suggests going eastward to the Pacific Ocean.

Mr. Abaya argued that "Bautista would have to use a tunnel-boring machine to dig a horizontal hole into which to insert his concrete-or steel-skinned tunnel tube. The residents of nearby P  
osadas  
Village  
would certainly object to a tunnel being bored underneath their subdivision. So would business and building owners along the length of  
Sucat Road  
. They would certainly question the wisdom of building a tunnel that could conceivably weaken the buildings' foundations."

### The Abaya Alternative

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

Mr. Abaya recalled the wisdom of a Parañaque Spillway but presented a curious alternative. Instead the floodwaters flowing westward to the Manila Bay through Parañaque, he suggests going eastward to the Pacific Ocean

In reply to a request from Rey Santaromana, an urban planning graduate student at UP Diliman, who asked him to critique his proposal for solving the flooding of Laguna de Bay, he wrote back saying that the best place to locate the desired spillway would be at the eastern end of the lake, near Famy or Siniloan, in Laguna.

He said the area around Famy and Siniloan is largely forested and agricultural and that any need to expropriate land or tunnel under built-up areas would be much cheaper than doing the same in Parañaque.

His article continues: "And although the strip of land between the lake and the Pacific Ocean is longer than the strip of land between the lake and

Manila

Bay

which is approximately eight kilometers, he elaborated that a spillway around Famy or Siniloan does not have to extend all the way to the ocean. It can end on the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre, as long as it is several meters lower than at the entry point. The discharged water can then meander its way to the ocean, or a channel can be blasted for it through the foothills.

“The discharged water can be tapped to turn the turbines of two or three mini-hydros on the way down, thus generating some 6 to 12 mw of electricity for local communities. And the discharged water does not have to flow uselessly into the ocean. It can be caught in a catchment basin that can be developed for fisheries, tourism and human habitation.”

I agree with Tony Abaya that a spillway in Famy or Siniloan going eastward can be – as he thinks – “the catalyst for the development of the eastern seaboard of Luzon, from Mauban to Baler to Casiguran, and all its potentials for forestry, fisheries, mining, upland agriculture, tourism and even a major port on the Pacific Ocean, which will decongest the overcrowded National Capital Region and the equally overcrowded Lingayen-Lucena Corridor.”

I also agree to his concluding statements that “No government of these islands, from the time of the Aetas, has ever seen fit to make changes like this and develop this neglected side of Luzon.”

I also agree with him that “it is time to think outside the box, with a spillway at Famy or Siniloan, and an over-all plan by who else (but) Jun Palafox.”

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

Anything in engineering can be made possible. What challenges my non-technical mind, however, is whether the typography of the affected areas will be facile to and allow such bold measure.

A great factor that works in favor of the Parañaque Spillway is to merely gravitate the waters from the higher Laguna Lake to the lower Manila Bay.

The Parañaque Spillway is also a lot shorter. Almost a straight line, it is even less than the distance of ten kilometers from the crossing of Cubao or Shaw crossing with Epifanio de Los Santos Avenue to kilometer zero at the Rizal Monument at Roxas Boulevard, a few hundred meters from the Manila Bay.

However, I am excited with the idea of an eastward spillway going but with a sooner prototype going westward.

The Parañaque Spillway and Abaya's options are not mutually exclusive.

They can go together, both serving the common good.

Now let us leave the architects and urban planners, engineers and public works experts, and the environmental gurus to do their better part. # # #

**Editor's Notes:** To read the earlier articles in this series, please click on these hyperlinks:

[A People Caught in Its Own Dung](#)

[A People Caught in Its Own Dung \(Part II\)](#)

[Metro Manila Chairman Killed Flood-warning System](#) (Part III)

Written by Ado Paglinawan

Sunday, 01 November 2009 10:14 - Last Updated Sunday, 01 November 2009 11:51

---

[Restoring Rhyme and Reason Back to Metro Manila](#) (Part IV)

[Palafox's Tell All: Typhoon-caused Deaths and Destruction Were Not God's Acts but Were Results of Criminal Negligence](#) (Part V)

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)