

"Crisis of Sovereignty" Series (Part 18)

By Ado Paglinawan

The Roots of Our Democracy, the Birth of the Soberanos

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Philippine democracy is often referred to as a copy of its American predecessor.

Twenty-two years before the thirteen states comprising the United States of America passed in its Congress a unanimous declaration, "Join or Die" was created by one of its founding fathers, Benjamin Franklin. It first appeared as a political cartoon in the Pennsylvania Gazette on May 15, 1754

"Join or Die" - MabuhayRadio

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It was a woodcut showing a snake severed into eighths, each segment representing a British colony, and is the earliest known illustration representing colonial union in America.

The states represented were: South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania
,
New Jersey
,
New York
and
New England
consisting of one instead of four states, and altogether omitting
Delaware
and
Georgia
.

The 1776 declaration on the other hand presents the principles on which the then-thirteen states were severing themselves from British oppressive rule. Here we quote salient portions that apply to our situation:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

The very first principle of the new nation being formed is Equality. Significant here is the explicit source of such equality that is divine, not devolved by some monarch or despot, or by human legislation. This distinction is essential because being God-given, it means that this equality is absolute, incontrovertible, indisputable, undeniable, immutable and, therefore, not subject to any forfeiture.

That being so, equality thus renders among equals certain inherent entitlements or Rights, the first three of which are Life, Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness.

Note the order in which these rights are listed for it definitely expresses the priority of one over the next. One has to be alive to be free; and to pursue happiness, one must be free.

Freedom and equality serve as the individuating notes of a democracy where the people are sovereign. And to enforce sovereignty, people form a government.

Hence, "That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just

powers from the consent of the governed.”

Yes, here we must reiterate this truth even in the negative – Governments, therefore, are not the sovereign but the instrumentality by which that sovereignty is expressed for serving the benefit of the true sovereign people. Later, Abraham Lincoln could not more poignantly sum it up than “a government of the people, for the people and by the people.”

{xtypo_quote} The Bible says without a vision a nation perishes. Our nation cannot die, our people’s intended destination is a just-and-humane society, through a Government that shall embody all those lofty ideals and aspirations reflected as early as the Preamble and throughout our Constitution. {/xtypo_quote}

The Philippine Story

These truths are expressed with much verbosity in the present Constitution of the Philippines. The verbiage, I think, was intended by those who framed it because the Filipino could be hard at understanding principles that are mainly written as abstract. It could very well also because its rich writers wanted to obfuscate people’s understanding of their duties and rights under a constitutional democracy.

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But in my mind, the inspiration of that Constitution being the People Power Revolution in the year preceding, was being correctly read by the 1987 Constitutional Commission as advocating for a just and gentle society of the governed, for the governed and by the governed.

The Declaration of Independence by the thirteen United States and their subsequent Bill of Rights of 1791 reverberates in our own Constitution.

Yet as often expressed in the histories of many nations, sovereignty can be easily forfeited whenever it is not claimed, enforced and defended. I remember one of my political science professors saying that *sovereignty must be enforced in order that it might be protected*.

I say even more than that – sovereignty must not only be professed but lived out.

US Scenarios

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Living in America for most of my years since 1986, I have seen Americans citizens live out their sovereignty. It was there that I learned what constituency politics was all about. Elected officials are sensitive to the needs and expectations of those who vote for them because to be so increases their chances of being reelected.

Any occasion where the expectation setting of the voters are not met during the term of the elected can mean losing in the next elections. Their constituency seriously exercises their right to elect or to recall any candidate through the ballot. Congressional and local elections are often held every two years. This is of course made possible because in the US, elections are relatively free and honest, and the people's will is often reflected in the vote.

Americans live out their sovereignty, very seriously.

This is why when scandal hits any public official, shortly down the road is a resignation. President Richard Nixon had to resign when he met his Watergate. Senator Gary Hart had to quit the primaries for the presidency when his picture with blonde Donna Rice amorously on his lap as they were on board a sailboat, started circulating in media. Former Washington, DC, Mayor Marion Barry quit when police investigators found him in a hotel room having drugs with a female companion.

Philippine Scenarios

In our country, *delicadeza* is dead because the patronage of the one's constituents is hardly taken seriously. People buy their way into getting elected. Cheating in elections is always dealt with a slap on the wrist. In fact the rule of law has eroded into the rule of the three G's – guns, goons and gold.

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is perhaps the most thick-skinned face of all our Presidents. She introduced the fourth G – or "Garcillano", a Comelec official whose expertise was cheating in elections by shaving leads and pumping fraudulent votes against his clients' opponents. In the vernacular this is popularly known as "dagdag-bawas". She was caught calling Garcillano using her cell phone, reports of the progress of how they were cheating Fernando Poe, Jr. during the 2004 elections.

In the 2010 elections, the fifth "G" became Gloria herself.

The past pages have indicated how Gloria Arroyo as outgoing President, through its Secretary of Interior and Local Governments devised the 2010 elections, with full complicity of the Comelec, to ensure that the final outcome of the election could be leveraged for her protection after her term, how she would retain the power for any candidacy to prosper or fail depending on how her controlling hands would run from a controlling computer keyboard.

The Recent Elections

The 2010 automated election system was fixed from the very beginning, and with the controls turned over to her chosen successor at the ultimate moment. To do so, the Constituted was raped and major laws were violated. As the Arroyo exited, yet another democratic institution was razed totally to the ground.

But unlike what the Philippine Consultative Assembly did in 2005, which was to enumerate how the Arroyo government usurped power since 2001, destroyed our democratic institutions one by one, violated laws left and right, bankrupted our national coffers, thus enumerating the sins of a tyrannical rule in the same way that the thirteen separating united states listed the "history of repeated injuries and usurpations" of the British Colony, we are more interested in finding the most-appropriate answer to the question of Rene Azurin in the preceding chapter – "What are those of us who claim we are concerned citizens going to do about it?"

The 1776 document offers this solution - *"That whenever any Form of Government `becomes destructive of these ends, (referring to the people's inalienable rights), it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new Government, laying its foundation on such*

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principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness."

With the attack on the people's sovereignty by frustrating the ballot, with the failure of the other co-equal arms of government to correct the crime even after exhaustion by concerned citizens of all administrative recourse to as far as laying their petitions for corrective action on the feet of the Supreme Court, it is my belief that the situation has gone past anyone's sense of prudence and long suffering.

"Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable than right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed."

Indeed, the grade for the next step has been reached, more than substantially:

"But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future Security."

The Prognosis

The Solidarity for Sovereignty considers this the apogee of what a citizen of any democratic government must be prepared to undertake in order that he might protect his rightful place as sovereign and the inalienable rights that flow from it.

The Filipino dictionary is out of words for a translation of "sovereign" into the vernacular. "Bayani" perhaps but *bayani* literally means hero, and so its own implications complicate. Solidarity in Filipino can mean "katipunan".

The Spanish translation is perhaps the closest. There is "Solidaridad" for solidarity and "soverenia" for sovereignty. Solidarity for Sovereignty translates as "La Solidaridad para la Soverenia".

But what about the sovereign? In Spanish, he is called "soverano" and as Filipino words coined from Spanish merely drops the "v" and substitutes it with "b", then our new word is "soberano".

Solidarity for Sovereignty. ***Ang Katipunan ng Mga Soberano.***

So join or die.

Soberanos claim, enforce and defend their sovereignty. Sovereignty that is not claimed, enforced and defended can be construed as forfeiture or surrender of one's rights to it.

In fact in this regard, acquiescence, or keeping silent in the face of oppression or tyranny, is more often regarded as tacit permission accepting such oppression or tyranny. Collectively, this is how a people lose their sovereignty.

This is how the indios lost their sovereignty to both the Spaniards and the Americans. Collaboration was how we lost our sovereignty to the Japanese. This is how 90-million Filipino subservient chickens are now losing their sovereignty to the colonial subalterns in our present society that are the evil oligarchies and the ruling elite of their own skin and nationality.

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A failure of elections and a failure of government are now confluencing (sic) to strike a death blow to our sovereignty. This is because as President Manuel L. Quezon predicted, we are now a nation ran like hell by Filipinos.

Ramon Pedrosa, an S4S convenor, says those who turn traitor to their kind during the pre-Hispanic times, were fed to the crocodiles. It is from our forebears, therefore that we get the motto of the Soberanos:

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"An kusog ku, ha raayat ku!" Our power comes from our people. It is clear that as ancient as the *balanghais* coming to shore, all in it understood that it is in their solidarity that they were able in the first place to reach their destination.

The Bible says without a vision a nation perishes. Our nation cannot die, our people's intended destination is a just and humane society, through a Government that shall embody all those lofty ideals and aspirations reflected as early as the Preamble and throughout our Constitution.

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But only Soberanos will get there. # # #

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