

JGL Eye Column

By JOSEPH G. LARIOS

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CHICAGO (*jGLi*) – When Philippine President Diosdado Macapagal moved on Aug. 4th, 1964, the celebration of Philippine Independence Day from July 4th, 1946 to June 12, 1898

, Filipinos in the Philippines did not mind because their celebration was always overshadowed by America's celebration of its own Independence .

But Mr. Macapagal's moving the date of the Philippine Independence is like a son moving his date of birth because the son's birthday falls on the same

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day as his father's. Of course, there is no such thing as adopted birthday because this is against natural order.

Because nobody raised a howl when then-President Macapagal "reinvented" the Philippine political calendar, Filipinos have since accepted the movement of Philippine Independence celebration.

If you ask me, I don't care what day we are supposed to celebrate our Independence for as long as it represents a complete break from someone we were depending on.

For instance, in marriage, when your parents give your hand away in marriage, both parents and child are celebrating this rite of passage because they will be henceforth independent from each other.

The parents are happy that they will have an empty nest. While their adult child will just be as happy to build a new nest for themselves.

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When the United States granted the Philippines its Independence on July 4, 1946, nobody protested because the Philippines was a "U.S. Territory and later Commonwealth" up to that declaration.

SO WHAT IF PH INDEPENDENCE IS DWARFED BY US?

But when Mr. Macapagal changed the Philippine Independence celebration from July 4th to June 12th so that it can celebrate on her own and not be dwarfed by the U.S. celebration, the change appears flimsy since, like any birthday celebration, nobody can change one's birthday even if one is born on February 29 on a leap year!

That's why, some Filipinos, like myself, feel that the more we celebrate June 12 Independence Day, the more we deny that America gave us Independence on July 4th, 1946.

A Filipino American believes that Mr. Macapagal had no business changing the Philippine Independence from July 4th to June 12th.

R. Sonny Sampayan, a retired U.S serviceman, blogged that when the father of former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo made the calendar change, he did not disclose to the Filipino people his real motive for the change. Mr. Sampayan, a grand nephew of Filipino renowned romanticist author Carlos S. Bulosan

("America is in the Heart"), who died childless, feels that there was more than meets the eye on Mr. Macapagal's action.

When Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States as part of its territories in the Treaty of Paris on Dec. 10, 1898 in exchange of \$20-million, the Philippines could not still be considered an Independent nation on June 12, 1898, unlike Cuba, which was granted Independence by the U.S. in 1902.

Because he was searching for answers, Mr. Sampayan stumbled on a *Time*

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magazine article, "The Philippines: Debt of Honor," published on May 25, 1962, explaining how the Philippines changed its independence from July 4th to June 12th.

\$73-MILLION REASON

The article said it all started with a bill pending for a vote in the United States Congress. In 1946, the United States approved \$400-million war-damage related claims for the Philippines. Because the amount was inadequate, an additional \$73-million needed to be approved.

When the \$73-million was finally brought to the U.S. House of Representatives for a vote during the term of President John F. Kennedy, one congressman who supported the bill said, "It is a debt of honor." Other lawmakers thought that this was a debt that the United States could renege on.

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Although President Kennedy supported the bill, many U.S. lawmakers decided to vote against this bill. One lawmaker said, “It was an economy vote. There aren’t any Philippine votes in our districts.”

Upset at the turn of events, Mr. Macapagal canceled his goodwill trip to Washington

,
D.C.

, and signed Executive Order 28 (later Republic Act No. 4166) to change the Philippine Independence Day to

June 12, 1898

, from

July 4, 1946

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Perhaps, Mr. Sampayan feels that since Mr. Macapagal forgot that there is such a thing as separation of powers in a democratic government, he should not have taken the defeat of the \$73-million bill against Mr. Kennedy.

REVENGE OF THE *KATIPUNEROS!*

Mr. Macapagal should have realized that U. S. Congress could not just be a rubber-stamp of Mr. Kennedy no matter how popular Kennedy was, unless the U.S. deteriorates into a banana republic like they do in some dictatorial regimes.

Sonny Sampayan believes since the non-passage of the \$73-million was lame excuse used by Mr. Macapagal to change the date of Philippines Independence, Mr. Macapagal or his successors should have revoked his executive order (or urged Philippine Congress to revoke the law on the change of date of Independence) and “restore the true Philippine Independence Day on July 4, 1946, “because this was the significant day when the Philippines became a sovereign nation.”

On the other hand, I would not mind if Mr. Macapagal stuck to the June 12, 1898, Independence celebration for as long as he would tell the world that he was retaliating against the Americans for preventing Filipino forces (*Katipuneros*) from entering the captured city of Manila, so Americans could take credit for the surrender of Spaniards. After all, the resentment felt by the *Katipuneros* would later lead to the Philippine–American War , which would prove to be more deadly and costly than the Spanish–American War.

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Happy Fourth of July! # # #

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