

I am devoting my column to an article that Felicito C. Payumo prepared very recently for the Management Association of the Philippines. F. C. Payumo was a three-term Representative of the First District of Bataan, and former chairman and administrator of the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA).

Here is what former Congressman Payumo wrote:

QUOTE.

I visited Joe de V in his residence on the morning after that fateful "night of a hundred knives". We were together for almost twelve years in the House, but I have not visited him since I got out of Subic and when he was still entrenched as Speaker. I thought it was better that I was seeing him when I didn't have any favor to ask, and he was absolutely powerless to grant any.

It was already 9 a.m. and no one else was in the sala. I was alone for one full hour before the media people started coming in to interview the ex-Speaker. Yes, there were some *manangs* (matrons) who arrived later, but they were relatives from Pangasinan. There were no congressmen, local officials or businessmen. Outside the house, the street was unusually empty of cars.

For those who knew him well, it was not hard to like Joe de V. Although prone to hyperbolic statements, he was amiable to a fault. He dislikes confrontation. To him there is no gap that

On Joe de Venecia, Jun Lozada, Blink and the Hinge Factor - MabuhayRadio

Written by Gov. Ben Sanchez

Thursday, 21 February 2008 02:26 - Last Updated Monday, 03 March 2008 11:05

cannot be bridged, and no quarrel that cannot be resolved or smoothed over . . . a quintessential diplomat or a shrewd politician. But there is no mean bone in his body. How come he was suddenly abandoned?

Not many days later, we would be watching Jun Lozada on TV during the Senate hearing. No one knew him personally, but everyone's heart went out for him. When he cried, I saw not a few tearful eyes in the crowd. Why the flood of sympathy for him?

That he was articulate helped, but beyond that, it was easy for people to identify themselves with him. It didn't matter that he owned up to his share of moral lapses and even outright transgressions.

His imperfections only made him more credible. In Lozada, they see a neighbor, a relative or a friend who was violated by the State... not just his physical body but his person (nilapastangan ang pagkatao), and not just by plain thugs but by the goons of the State. They, likewise, felt violated. They are smart enough not to swallow the line of the President's men that Lozada was being protected when he was held captive during that long "joyride".

Why did the people believe Lozada and not those arrayed against him? It's only his word against the others'. Malcolm Gladwell (The Tipping Point) explained it in his other book, Blink. In a blink, people can tell if one is telling the truth or weaving a tale.

Just like the students can tell if a professor will be a lousy one after his first lecture. They don't have to wait until the end of the semester to render their judgment. Gladwell calls it the power of thin slicing - "human beings are capable of making sense of situations based on the thinnest slice of experience."

Is that the reason why the people know whose voice it was in the "Hello Garci" tape? No obfuscations from the "I have two tapes" tale of Secretary Ignacio Bunye or the voice print analysis from Mike Defensor can change their mind. And they were proven right by the "I am sorry" statement. There are, of course, exceptions. But more often than not, you can trust your rapid cognition. More information does not necessarily mean better.

What would the end game be? The impatient ask if this is the tipping point. It is hard to tell. But if the Administration has to learn from history, it is that hinge factors can cause events to take a sudden turn; that chance and stupidity can change the course of history. A student of military history, Erich Durschmied, has shown that many conflicts have been decided by the caprice of weather, or plain individual folly or incompetence.

From Agincourt to Mactan and to Vietnam the hinge factor was weather or human stupidity or the deadly combination of both. The numerically superior and armored French chevaliers were mowed down by the lances and arrows of the foot soldiers and archers of Henry V because of the fatal disregard by the French Commander of a field of battle made heavy by rain. "The soggy ground gripped the horses' hooves like thick molasses."

History repeated itself. What folly moved Magellan to disregard the long distance from his boats to shore because of low tide? Weighed down by their steel armor as they trudged on sharp corals, they were mowed down by the kampilan and spears and arrows of the foot soldiers and archers of Lapu-Lapu.

In Vietnam, the hinge factor was a single incident- the chief of South Vietnam's police, firing point blank into the head of another Vietnamese in a checked shirt and black shorts. While daily televised reports into American homes had helped catalyze public opinion against American involvement in the war, it was this one photograph, "the death of a man in a checked shirt on a street corner in Saigon, that first confirmed to many across the U.S. that this was a war fought for the wrong reasons, in the wrong country and on the wrong side . . .

From that moment on, American generals had to fight world opinion instead of the Vietcong, and American soldiers had to sacrifice their lives for no gains whatsoever."

That stupid act done in front of the camera could only be matched by another stupid act of shooting into the head of a man in the tarmac of our airport. That was what started the chain of events that unhinged the grip on power by the Marcos dictatorship.

Would the stupid act of seizing Lozada out of the airport and through the same tarmac, the unleashing of the Government's wrath against this probinsyanong intsik for speaking out, the repression of the rights of citizens and the paranoid reaction to the statements of the businessmen start the snowballing of anti-Administration demonstrations?

The answer is: It depends on how stupid the Government would respond. Like the text message threat to Ramon del Rosario, Jr.? That was a warning shot to all Makati Business Club members and the Management Association of the Philippines. Will they be cowed or now join the masa by sending down not just confetti but their employees to every demonstration on Ayala Avenue?

But history has been as much marked by chance and stupidity as by gallantry and heroism. We have countless stories of heroic feats of individual soldiers that turned the tide of battles. But there was one patriotic act of a Filipino General that prevented bloodshed by letting history run its course...in favor of the people.

General Artemio Tadiar was in command of a marine brigade that was ordered to fire shells into Camp Aguinaldo when the crowd was still thin. Since I was at EDSA with a group of friends at that time, I was curious and asked him after he was subsequently assigned in Subic as commander of the Subic Command (SubCom) why he did not obey.

Written by Gov. Ben Sanchez

Thursday, 21 February 2008 02:26 - Last Updated Monday, 03 March 2008 11:05

He said that he did not directly defy the order. To buy time, he asked permission to drive to Malacanang to "clarify the order." After getting final instructions to carry out the order, he took a round-about route back to his command. By that time, the crowd has thickened and he told Malacanang that to comply with the order would cause the massacre of thousands of civilians. There was no way he would have the blood of innocent people on his hands. That was the end game for Malacanang. The hinge factor was the good sense and patriotism of a General.

The rest was history. Will there be a repeat of this patriotic act?

UNQUOTE.

Editor's Notes: Governor Sanchez can be reached at altez91@gmail.com . He welcomes readers' feedbacks as hearing from readers interest him a lot.

[Joomla SEO powered by JoomSEF](#)