



Razor's Edge

By
Joe Mari Mercader
Executive Editor
FILIPINO TIMES
New York-New Jersey

Joe Mari Mercader - - -

House Resolution 737: Trojan Horse

"Speaker Prospero Nograles, who is certifiably a blind supporter of President Arroyo and who will go to any length to mummify her in power, is the principal sponsor of said resolution."

NEW YORK, N.Y., Feb. 13 (PinoyGlobal) - It is my gut feeling that House Resolution 737, which was hurriedly approved by the Committee on constitutional amendments last week, is sugarcoated nomenclature for that unpopular, unacceptable and detestable Charter change (Cha cha)! Bluntly speaking, our people don't relish hearing about it. They may be in the mood to alter the 1987 fundamental law after the lame duck Arroyo administration exits next year. Even that is no guarantee because the Constitution is barely 30 years old.

With the elections not far behind the resolution is a freak at this point in time. It has no merit to speak of, except negative possibilities, and off hand I can cite two: 1) It can delay the elections and that can lead to freezing the term limit of elective officials – a calamity in any language. It is bad enough that they are there doing nothing but wallowing in a cesspool of corruption. It would indeed be unthinkable if the law legitimizes their unwarranted stay a day longer than their terms, particularly the president's, whose governance leaves a bad taste in the mouth, dismal as it is. 2) A new form of government could be grafted that would virtually mummify President Arroyo in office. Either prospect is grim for our already crestfallen people.

Speaker Prospero Nograles, who is certifiably a blind supporter of President Arroyo and who will go to any length to mummify her in power, is the principal sponsor of said resolution. This is his way of paying back for his lofty position. We know Malacanang engineered his coup to depose his predecessor, Joe de Venecia.

Nograles seems to be in a perpetual trance of being grateful to Pres. Arroyo. Filipinos, especially those from the provinces, tend to overdo their gratitude and

Nograles typically exhibits this obscene inclination to a point of being nauseatingly obsequious to GMA. Concededly, without GMA no way could he have deposed former Speaker Joe de Venecia who shamelessly pampered his boys in Congress with huge largess to keep him as Speaker for over twelve years. This was easy with the P3.4-billion yearly allocation his office got for which he was not strictly obligated to give an accounting, as in fact he never did. If he ever did it was a mere formality or facade to douse the peeved opposition.

By and large HR 737 can be construed as the Trojan horse that will subtly formalize GMA's permanence in the seat of power. More than that, once it becomes a law the bedlam sweeping across the nation would be like a plague of woes spreading from an open Pandora's box.

I see nothing sensible in the resolution except to obviate Gloria's term limit that is coming up next year, and that would be a disaster. Presently, mending the Constitution is grossly unnecessary and absolutely inappropriate. To quote the Latin adage – "cui bono," who gains by it? Clearly, Malacanang is exhausting every avenue to reroute the critical time constraint established by the elections once said House Resolution is in motion.

The people's apprehension heightened when the Senate overhauled its totem pole. It is dubiously significant that Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, an administration senator, would dethrone then Senate President Manny Villar Jr., who was and still is vehemently opposed to the Charter change (Cha cha). Meanwhile, Enrile has just signified being open-minded about amending the Constitution. What does that tell us? I will consult my spiritual adviser as to

what that seeming indiscretion means.

Personally, I believe Senate President Enrile is a righteous public official. He showed granite conviction and commendable leadership as he stood up against his own benefactor, the late Dictator Marcos, when the government went berserk violating human rights with unmitigated perversion. He joined the congress of the streets in deposing the regime he once belonged to as a consequential official when the martial law government of Marcos was first instituted. For empathizing with the masses in the streets on that crucial hour of EDSA One, the people owe him one.

But sounding off his acquiescence to amend the Constitution now when Pres. Arroyo is unwilling to relinquish power, even if it means that the people are stampeded by the military and her cohorts, is a downer. It gives us the chilly feeling that somehow there is a conspiracy between the heads of both congressional chambers. Speaker Nograles is leading the orchestra in the Lower House and possibly he (Enrile) in the Senate to save the Queen (GMA). Evidently, both are pledged to solidify Gloria's chances of beating the term limit to enable her to run under whatever form of government that might be crafted by the Constituent Assembly. On this I already sound like a broken record but it will come to pass given the desperate mood of the president to cling to power.

Senate President Enrile himself admitted that = 20 a Constituent Assembly is the fastest way to amend the Constitution. This statement is alarming because it could be a cue for Gloria's diehard solons to constitute Congress into such an assembly to rush the amendment that will change the complex of government and the destiny of the nation solely for the political gratification of Ms. Arroyo.

The question is - why the Charter change now? Cannot that project wait until after the elections to remove malicious speculations bound to spring up that something malodorous is afoot? GMA's perpetuation has percolated to demonic proportions now that the World Bank (WB) categorically identified the First Gentleman as the principal instigator of rigged biddings and infrastructure contracts financed by said bank.

If I may digress a bit, I would like to say that Sec. Ermita must really think the public is stupid to believe that Malacanang hasn't got a copy of the World Bank report that zeros in on the First Gentleman Mike Arroyo as the big guy who rigs most WB-funded projects, brazenly demanding "grease money" from contractors and foreign businessmen. And by way of assuaging people's resentment to these flagrant anomalies, he hastens to say Malacanang's ears are glued on the ground if such a report is there. I did not know he or

the entire population in the Palace are deaf that they never heard of the World Bank finger-pointing at Mike Arroyo as wading in every piece of the juicy infrastructure projects funded by the World Bank. Are we to believe the WB top echelons are like the boy who cried wolf?

I find it absurd that the opposition and Malacanang's congressional boys sling arrows at each other. Speaker Nograles barefacedly insists that the WB report is nothing but hearsay in the absence of evidence. What better evidence is there than the report itself of 20 said international bank, which has been emblazoned in the newspapers. And it is hard to believe that our government has not gotten hold of a copy or copies of such a news-breaking report from a prestigious organization such as the World Bank.

On the other hand, it is wishful thinking of the opposition to expect that Madam Arroyo will compromise her husband by being transparent about his bid-rigging activities, and send him to jail. Nobody believes she will. So what's the point? Just bring this matter to the electorate at election time. Maybe they will listen and vote for the right man or woman for president, assuming that the elections proceed on schedule next year.

This convoluted Charter plot is of no benefit to the nation now any more than Sec. Bert Romulo's dependence to Pres. Arroyo is to the people. The author of HR 737, Speaker Nograles, makes it appear that it is being "expedited" to modify the economic policy that would entice "foreign investors" to plow oodles and oodles of green bucks in our country. The come-on gimmick is that they could own properties just as the Parity Right of long ago gave 99 years equal rights to Americans with bona fide Filipino citizens. It took the hot knife slicing cold butter reasoning and passionate nationalism of Sen. Claro M. Recto to rectify the lopsided privilege, cutting it down to 25 years. By that time the 25 years were already exhausted, ending the anomalous Parity Rights.

As ex-Sen. Franklin Drilon said, "No amount of sugar-coating or media spin can deodorize that self-serving objective." As I said the resolution is an open Pandora's box because it will unleash all the ills demonizing us. Why should Pres. Arroyo be immortalized in power with the kind of rotten government she runs, and the cronies she has been harboring these past nine years to the chagrin of our hapless citizens? Let us not relive the Marcos era of repression where power was concentrated in the clenched fist of one man, who used it to the hilt to intimidate the puny masses with unconscionable impunity.

These charges are no rhetoric, but realities that we underwent and continue to suffer despite the absence of naked martial law, for a hydra has many heads and faces and Gloria's governance is one such monster! #