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PerryScope

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Danding's Choice

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., Oct 14 (PinoyGlobal) - In my May 27, 2009 column, "Gloria's Gambit," I asked: "Would De Castro kowtow to Gloria? If he does, he will be taking a great risk of losing his base of support because Gloria's 'anointment' might turn out to be a 'kiss of death' which could put an end to his political life." I was right. De Castro turned down Gloria's "anointment" and his reason was that it would be a "kiss of death." Bingo!

And then I asked: "And what would happen to Teodoro? I would not be surprised if Gloria would use him as a pawn to sacrifice in her opening gambit. . . unless he changes his mind and settles as De Castro's vice presidential running mate." Well, the question is now academic since it was predicated on De Castro accepting Gloria's "anointment." Secretary of Defense Gilberto "Gibo" Teodoro is now the choice of the Executive Committee of Lakas-Kampi-CMD, PaLaKa for short, as their standard bearer. They also selected Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government Ronaldo "Ronnie" Puno as his vice presidential running mate.

In a few days, Gibo's former political party, the Nationalist People's Coalition (NPC), will be selecting its presidential and vice presidential candidates. For its standard bearer, the odds-on favorite is Sen. Francis "Chiz" Escudero, who just turned 40 years old -- the minimum age for presidential candidates -- last October 10. Sen. Loren Legarda is believed to be their choice for vice presidential candidate.

Now, the question is: Who are the people who would support Chiz and bankroll his campaign? This brings us

squarely on Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, the founder and power behind NPC. Is he going to support Chiz Escudero or his erstwhile "favorite nephew" and former political heir, Secretary of Defense Gilberto "Gibo" Teodoro?

A few days ago, Danding broke his silence and said: "I'm the founder of the party (NPC). I think I have to support my own party that I founded, I think it is but normal." He also said, "One of my nephews left even if we did not ask him to leave. It only means that we are of no consequence to him. So why should that be a bother to me?" He was referring to Gibo who left the NPC to join PaLaKa to pursue his presidential ambitions. Danding unequivocally said that he will not support Noynoy nor Gibo.

Danding's revelation changes the whole game. The "Cojuangco War" is no longer just between Noynoy and his cousin Gibo. It is now among three members of the Cojuangco clan: Noynoy Aquino, Gibo Teodoro, and their Uncle Danding whose choice is the NPC nominee-to-be, presumably, Chiz Escudero.

It's interesting to note that it was Danding who prevailed upon Gibo to come back home to run for office in 1998. Gibo was at that time practicing law in New York. He came home, ran for Congress, and won. He became the leader of the large NPC bloc in the House until he was termed out in 2007. He then accepted the post of Secretary of Defense in the Arroyo administration. However, there was no evidence that he resigned his membership from NPC. This led many

people to believe that he left the door wide open to go back to NPC and seek the party's nomination for president.

It was only after he was required to join PaLaKa as a prerequisite to being considered for nomination that he formally affiliated with PaLaKa. On September 15, 2009, he was selected by the party's Executive Committee as their standard bearer. However, his selection has yet to be ratified by the party's membership.

But why did Gibo leave NPC? He could have stayed in NPC and still become its presidential bet. Somewhere along the way, a serious fallout might have happened between him and his Uncle Danding.

However, if Gibo had shown high poll ratings, I'm pretty sure that Danding, politically savvy as he is, would not hesitate to throw his support behind Gibo, regardless of party affiliation. Danding is a power by himself and NPC is just a vehicle to achieve political ends. But just like any other "vehicle," it can easily be replaced. The bottom line is: If the election was held today, Gibo would lose miserably. In my opinion, that's the primary reason why Danding would not support Gibo. Blood, after all, is not as thick as politics... particularly in the Cojuangco clan ("The Cojuangco Wars," PerryScope September 22, 2009).

And who would Gloria support? In my August 18, 2009 column, "The Looming Battle Royale," I said: "So, who do you think Gloria would support knowing that whoever her party's candidate will be, would lose? There is only one person who would fit the mold of the candidate that Gloria would support... secretly. And that is Francis 'Chiz' Escudero." Indeed, his "winnability" is much better than

Gibo's.

Chiz might attempt to assert his independence if he wins but that's wishful thinking. The Arroyos and the Cojuangcos will own him and nothing will change. It will be "business as usual" with the Arroyo-Cojuangco business interests controlling the government... and, for that matter, the country. In the Philippines, politics is business and business is politics. And as someone once said, "There are no permanent friends and no permanent enemies, only permanent self-interests." Yes, indeed.

To date, Gloria -- who had previously "anointed" Noli De Castro who turned it down -- has yet to "anoint" Gibo. She did, however, say that she was "elated" over the endorsement of Gibo by 49 governors. But "elated" does not translate to "anointed" or "endorsed."

So, what's Gloria really up to? In my opinion, she's keeping her options open. She could eventually throw her support behind Chiz or Manny Villar... or even Erap Estrada. She would support anyone of the candidates who would dance to her tune. Remember, she would still be in control of the Commission on Election. She pulled a "win" in 2004 for herself. She can do it again for her "manok" in 2010.

At the end of the day, Gloria's ultimate goal is to prevent Noynoy Aquino from winning the presidential elections next year. Follow the money and you'll know on whose shoulders Gloria would be putting her political survival on. I said it before and I'm going to say it again: the battle for the presidency would be between Noynoy Aquino and Danding's choice -- and, possibly, Gloria's "secret candidate" -- Chiz Escudero.