



Razor's Edge

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Dirty Harry or Hungry Old Harry

NEW YORK, NY Sept. 05 (PinoyGlobal) - As the hostage investigation back home began to progress with amazing speed, the picture that surfaced was the maladroit handling of the crisis situation by those assigned to negotiate with the schizophrenic Rolando Mendoza. . . Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim and Chief Supt. Rodolfo Magtibay.

It appears the two officers complacently left their microcosmic command posts at the Quirino Grandstand in Luneta, to gorge gourmet food at Emerald Restaurant. By this token they wittingly or unwittingly, jeopardized the on going talks. In fact, their nonchalance hastened the atrocious killings in that tourist bus where the victims were ruthlessly mowed down by the paranoid Mendoza.

Police Supt. Orlando Yebra Jr. was left behind but apparently he failed to impress the volatile Mendoza to surrender. Instead the latter shot Yebra. To the good fortune of Orlando, he survived the volley unscathed by the skin of his teeth. But the deadly turmoil raged on when Mendoza went ballistic after seeing in the bus television set the arrest of his brother, Gregorio. The order came from Mayor Lim. Where else?

This snafu depicted the extent of the latter's unbridled arrogance and ill-conceived decision. Rolando feel betrayed at which point he went into an orgy of murdering the hostages, eight of whom were from Hong Kong. Their fatality brought about our problem with that Chinese colony.

Expectedly, the merciless massacre of those poor innocent victims portrayed the Philippines as unsafe tourist destination. Although the nation is not to blame for this barbarity, but because the brutal episode was committed on Philippine

soil by a deranged Filipino our image as a nation has been tarnished, somehow.

On this isolated event, the world took the chance of hyping the unfair conclusion that one can get killed by bandits, hired assassins and even by a paranoid police officer in the Philippines. That mosaic stupid yarn is stranger than fiction in our country. One bad egg does not mean the entire nation has become a bunch of conscienceless murderers. But the victims' relatives believe otherwise and refuse to accept our pleas for forgiveness.

To reiterate, Lim and Magtibay were away from their respective command posts even though the mercurial hostage-taker has already tried to kill Supt. Yebra Jr. Lim's excuse that he was hungry not having eaten lunch that day mangles logic because no responsible officer, much more the mayor of the embattled city leaves his command post at the height of a chaotic scene. Such dereliction has no parallel whatsoever in a civilized society.

For the love of reason, I cannot divine why if he was hungry he did not order food from Emerald Restaurant or nearby Manila Hotel. And to make matters worse he had to drag with him - ground commander Magtibay - who directed the strategy in those critical 12-hour negotiation even though the weather was menacing and uncooperative that night.

He was there to save the hostages not to socialize with Mayor Lim who thinks that he is Dirty Harry in the raw. This sobriquet has been Lim's aphrodisiac for his macrocosmic ego or arrogance since it was appended to him years ago for disposing, according to legend, of drug pushers and hardened criminals extra judicially when he was a policeman.

This could be fiction because there is no proof to that effect, but he never discouraged the street legend.

Lim has the audacity to say he did not order Magtibay to join him for dinner; he just invited Rodolfo. Excuse me, sir. Are you talking to me? because if you are - your "palusot" - apart from being corny - does not impact reason. Deserting the crucial negotiation can be fatal and is exactly what took place. Incidentally, when the high priest in the area like Manila Mayor Lim invites you, the invite takes the form of a tacit command.

Lim knew that with him and Magtibay away, nobody else had the authority to make major decisions regarding demands from the hostage-taker. Thus the fragile crisis became exceedingly important to handle because the lives of the tourists hanged on the insanity of their kidnapper. There was really no telling when the situation would explode but it did with murderous momentum. Almost all the hostages were killed because nobody knew whom to follow or what command to execute.

Well, what can one do if an old man is hungry and wants to eat pronto or he will collapse? But did he have to go to a restaurant when he can order food from his command post at Luneta? And did he have to be on a peripatetic mood of walking to Emerald Restaurant towing with him the chief negotiating officer in the hostage crisis?

Remember the man they were dealing with was schizophrenic who was harassed by complex problems with the Ombudsman and Lim's stupid order to arrest Mendoza's brother. Vacating the rostrum of authority even temporarily that night was grossly unwise because the consequences can be gruesome. That Lim and Magtibay did what they did exhibit the low regard they have for responsibilities.

Be that as it may, he had the gall to tell the investigating committee headed by DoJ Sec. Leila de Lima that he left because he was hungry. And he told Magtibay not to panic because that guy (Mendoza) is bound to be hungry, sleepy and tired in the morning. He suggested to wait-and-see until Rolando wears off. Meanwhile they proceeded as planned to Emerald Restaurant while the tourists were being shot at in the bus.

The thing he overlooked is that a man who is angry, hungry, tired and sleepy can become a time bomb or disaster waiting to happen. What erupted after he left the scene of the crisis situation is jointly the fault of Lim and Magtibay.

From the negotiation fiasco, it is time to ask if it is wise to elect old people to office. The consequences can be dire in terms

of lives and fortunes. Old fogies occupying important positions are there for the ego of it and because the electorate choose to patronize them, but is it prudent?

The aging Mayor Lim may be suffering from mental lapses already and should be retired. Our electorate would be masochists if they put him to office until he turns to a hundred.

Which reminds me that he barged with his gang of bullies into the campaign headquarters of Kim Atienza, who was Lim's rival for Manila mayor in the local elections. He was allegedly looking for evidence of cheating, which was overkill because Kim already conceded. Still, Lim and those with him commandeered papers in that office and bullied everybody around. Is that the behavior of a decent and dependable leader, supposed to be father of his constituents? You be the judge dear readers.

It is for this reason and many more that people should be circumspect in electing candidates with advanced age who are liabilities to the nation. I rest.