

Tribute to Prof. Emmanuel Q. Yap

*Josef T. Yap**

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The Honorable Sigfrido R. Tinga, Chairman, Committee on Information and Communication Technology; Honorable Albert Raymond S. Garcia, Chairman, Committee on Trade and Industry; and Hon. Cesar G. Jalosjos, Committee on Government Reorganization; our friends from Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department, headed by Dr. Jun Miral; officers and staff of the House of Representatives, my colleagues from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good Afternoon. On behalf of my mother, my siblings and other members of the Yap family, I would like to express my gratitude to the CPBRD and the House of Representatives for the honor they have bestowed on my father, Professor Emmanuel Q. Yap.

My father was born and raised in Angeles, Pampanga which became a city on January 1, 1964. This was at the time that Rafael del Rosario was mayor and my father was his principal adviser. I would venture to say that they were the two of the main forerunners of dynamic economic development and good governance at the local level. As a matter of fact, the reason we migrated from Angeles City to Quezon City in 1966 was the conflict my father and Mayor del Rosario had with Commander Sumulong (the *nom de guerre* of Faustino del Mundo) who at that time was establishing a criminal network in Angeles City anchored on real estate, gambling, bars, and prostitution. [LAST PART SOURCED FROM W. Chapman "Inside the Philippine Revolution, page 65]

My father then worked with Speaker Jose B. Laurel, Jr. which largely came about because my father was a protégé of the Speaker's father, President Jose P. Laurel. Together with Speaker Laurel, my father established the Congressional Economic Planning Office or CEPO in 1968. CEPO is of course the precursor of the CPBRD. My father was appointed as the first head of CEPO. The office was in the old Congress, which is now part of the National Museum. The most significant output of CEPO was Joint Resolution Number 2 or what is known as the Magna Carta of Social Justice and Economic Freedom which was signed into law by President Marcos on August 4, 1969.

I recall the story my father narrated about the birth of the Magna carta. One day in 1968, my father was requested by Speaker Laurel to meet him in his residence in Shaw Boulevard (which was purchased by Senator Villar a few years ago). Together they proceeded to Malacañang, with Speaker Laurel himself driving the car. There was even an amusing incident because the guard at Malacañang did not recognize Speaker Laurel and at first refused them entry into the compound.

* President, Philippine Institute for Development Studies. The tribute was delivered at the House of Representatives on the occasion of the launching of the Electronic Resource Base for Legislation (ERBL) which is a joint effort between PIDS and CPBRD. The usual disclaimer applies.

In Malacañang, President Marcos requested them to craft a national economic plan. Perhaps we can consider this meeting a precursor of LEDAC. As the saying goes, the rest is history. It still amazes me that my father was only 37 years old when the Magna Carta was signed into law. As I mentioned in the tribute I circulated last year, perhaps the biggest tragedy in my father's life is that he peaked too early and the downward trajectory in his career was exacerbated by the declaration of Martial Law.

It would be fair to describe the Magna Carta as “nationalist” and “protectionist” and even “unfavorable to free enterprise”. Many present-day economists, including most of my colleagues in PIDS, will frown upon its contents. The Magna Carta, however, has its economic merits especially if it is juxtaposed against the strategy of foreign borrowing that was followed by the economic team during Martial Law. Section C of the Magna Carta states: “Austerity and self-reliance are among the keystones to progress and national greatness.” The Magna Carta largely emulated the successful state-led strategies of Japan, Korea and Taiwan.

I leave the discussion of the economics of the Magna Carta for another day. Instead, I would like to delve on two important aspects directly related to its promulgation.

The first is that the Magna Carta was unanimously approved by both chambers of Congress, i.e. the HOR and the Senate. Among the more prominent signatories were: Benigno Aquino, Jr., Neptali Gonzales, Ramon Mitra, Jovito Salonga, Jose and Eduardo Cojuangco, Jose Diokno, and Salvador Laurel. It is noteworthy that it is also known as Joint Resolution Number 2. My father used to say that Joint Resolution Number 1 was the affirmation of Philippine independence. I don't know if that account is accurate since I encountered many “joint resolutions” when I tried to confirm this through google.

Nevertheless, what is important is that the Magna Carta is clear evidence of significant collective action in Philippine society at a critical period in our history. Several economic experts, especially those who advocate the New Institutional Economics, view collective action as crucial to economic development. Collective action is important for building and sustaining institutions. A simple way to view collective action is to associate it with teamwork. A major factor in building this alliance was—to borrow a term from the Institutional Economists—the “political entrepreneurship” of Speaker Laurel.

The Magna Carta brought many segments of Philippine society into the same page. This would include the private sector, members of which were consulted extensively during congressional hearings, civil society, the Catholic Church—my father obtained his college degree from Ateneo and maintained close ties with the Jesuits—and the left. Both Speaker Laurel and my father had close ties with the brilliant Lava brothers some of whom were the leaders of the Partido Komunista ng Pilipinas (PKP). I would like to point out though that the older brothers, Paquito and Horacio, who were closest to my father, were not members of the PKP.

The second important aspect related to the Magna Carta is how quickly this alliance unravelled. Years later, after careful analysis and research, it became clear to my father that a force external to Philippine society was behind the dismantling of this alliance. There were three key developments that underscored this process: one, my father was unceremoniously eased out of CEPO shortly after the Magna Carta was promulgated. Meanwhile, in 1971, Jose B. Laurel lost the position of Speaker of the HOR; two, the emergence of the Communist Party of the Philippines in 1968 and the rapid escalation of violence culminating in the bombing of Plaza Miranda in August of 1971; and three, the emergence of a group we can broadly refer to as the right-wing which orchestrated the declaration of Martial Law. In more than one occasion my father lamented that he was the first victim of Martial Law.

Another important conclusion of my father is that the right-wing and the CPP were actually two sides of the same coin. The interaction and confrontation between these two forces effectively marginalized the moderate and progressive-minded nationalists.

Of course the logical question is who did the coin flipping at that time. I do not wish to delve into the more controversial aspects of my father's analysis. We are in the process of putting his life and thoughts into a book and I encourage you to read it once it is published. Just a teaser: I hope the author Butch Dalisay includes reference to the organizational meeting of the CPP or the meeting that brought Jose Maria Sison and Bernabe Buscayno together (my father may have mixed up the two meetings). Up to now it still boggles my mind when I recall the list of personalities who were present at that meeting.

My fervent hope is that by knowing and understanding this nugget of Philippine history, we can get more insights into the problems that plague Philippine society today, particularly with regard to the need to promote collective action. As can be gleaned from my account, the CEPO and CPBRD indeed have an illustrious history. I am pleased that the CPBRD has continued to perform a crucial role in the legislative process. We look forward to our continued partnership. Once again I would like to express my appreciation for this honor. Thank you very much for your kind attention.