It’s not over

NO HOLDS BARRED

Armida Siguion-Reyna 03/25/2011

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His presence in China delayed the original execution of the three Filipino drug mules in China. But since even at his most hopeful, Vice President Jejomar Binay did not say anything about the trio’s commutation of punishment from death to life imprisonment, I’m not surprised to hear about Sally Ordinario-Villanueva, Ramon Credo and Elizabeth Batain facing a firing squad on March 30.

I don’t want this to happen. I grieve that this is going to happen.

Still, sed lex, dura lex, as it goes in Latin. No matter the law is harsh, it has to be upheld, it has to be applied. Under Chinese laws, the smuggling of illegal drugs is punishable by death. It can’t be said China is downright cruel, it is lenient toward those apprehended with less than 50 grams, of, say, heroin. You’re caught with more than that, and everything else hits the fan.

Batain was arrested first, with 6,800 grams of heroin, on May 24, 2008, in Shenzen. Ordinario-Villanueva was next, with 4,110 grams of the same on Dec. 24, 2008, in Xiamen. Credo, with 4,113 grams again of heroin, four days later, on Dec. 28, also in Xiamen.

Six thousand, eight hundred grams is equal to 239.86 ounces, or 14.99 pounds, of heroin. What gave Batain the idea that she could carry that much contraband undetected from one airport to another?

It’s perhaps not so much the “what,” as it is the “who.” May nagsabi sa kanyang gawin iyon, may nagturo sa kanya kung paano, at may nangako sa kanyang puwede. Where are they now, these agents, who presumably promised Batain and company heaven and earth in exchange for the smuggling? Will they ever be caught? Is anyone even planning to lay out a trap for them, a dragnet? Wala akong nababalitaan.

I’m not saying the government, this and the one just past, have not done anything for incarcerated overseas foreign workers. Way before the Vice President was sent to China last February, legal and consular assistance had already been provided for the three, and likewise for around 220 others languishing in still other Chinese jails. As I write, word is out the immediate families of Batain, Ordinario-Villanueva and Credo are to be sent to China courtesy of the government, so, there. May ginagawa naman ang gobyerno. Except it’s not enough.

As with cancer, prevention is the best cure. Had the airport authorities been truly doing their jobs, there is no way for drugs to get out of the country through our airports. Mahabaging langit, cuticle nipper lang ang inilalabas ko ng bansa, pirmi pa itong nakukumpiska sa akin dahil bawal, pagkatapos may nakakapaglabas ng heroin na mabigat pa sa bagong panganak?

I’ve said this here over and over again. There’s a syndicate in our airports preying on the kapit sa patalim. They’re the ones who let the drugs pass the X-ray machines, in exchange for money bigger that what the mules themselves get for their one-time courier jobs. Ang sindikatong ito ang dapat hulihin at ikulong ng habang-buhay, for they are just as guilty.

There are similar opinions out on the Internet, where some are sympathetic to the plight of the victims, and others share my view. I usually check www.ellentordesillas.com and scan through what’s said there, and here on this issue — as with the upcoming impeachment of Merceditas Gutierrez — there are lively and intelligent exchanges, and here I print a couple, exactly as written on the blog.

From Juggernaut: “If China believes that killing those three will actually achieve something, they’re gravely mistaken, there’s a lot more where they came from, we have several million more starving countrymen waiting in line to be drug mules and they will keep on coming. Very soon their jails, their gallows will be swamped with Filipinos who are more willing to die after a brief stint of luxury rather than languish in poverty.

“A more long term solution would be to deport those Filipino criminals to serve punishment here and vice versa — we deport the big-time drug syndicate Chinese nationals here that the local laws can’t touch. Try that and they’ll see some dramatic changes. If you don’t want to get wet — turn off the faucet.”

I must admit this bit stunned me, the allegation about “big-time drug syndicate Chinese nationals here that the local laws can’t touch.” I’d heard rumors from way back when, including the talk that Hubert Webb’s imprisonment really had to do with the deportation of some big drug lords. True or false, I had no idea the usap-usapan was more or less an open secret.

Food for thought, from Parasabayan: “It is sad to see our own people punished for a crime in another country but this is the harsh reality. Most of our kababayans put blinders and think that anywhere in the world they can do a Filipino style of doing things. Pwedeng pakiusapan at pwedeng lusutan. We are so lax with the enforcement of our laws in our own country. We can throw trash anywhere we please but in other countries, we know where to find the trash can. We can follow rules in other countries but not in our own country. It is this attitude that gets the better of us. Dito sa dating gawi natin tayo nalilintikan.

“Yes, it is the urge to improve ones’ life that our kababayans do these things but I see it as a ‘short cut’ to a distorted and misguided illusion of success. Our people think that money is the only measurement of success and anyone who has money or material wealth, by whatever means, is successful. Then we wonder why the hoodlums are treated as gods in our country and most of them find themselves in public positions.

“When our kababayans get caught in other countries violating rules, naawa tayo. It is painful to see them pay for their crimes. In the first place, if their values are in the right place, these mules will never do the crime they will be paying their lives with. It is a wrong ‘choice’ but they made the choice themselves.”

Parasabayan’s words could have been mine, I agree, a hundred percent.

No, it’s not over yet. And it won’t be until the full impact of the law is applied to the syndicates here as it will be on our three kababayan in China, a week from now.

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