

Is Duterte thinking of resigning?

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BY RIGOBERTO D. TIGLAO ON AUGUST 17, 2018 OPINION ON PAGE ONE

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CURIOUS about the front-page newspaper reports that President Duterte said that he was thinking of resigning, as he's exhausted and tired from the "endless" fight against corruption, I read the transcript of his speech, and even watched a video of it. The speech was made at the launch ceremony for "Go Negosyo, Pilipinas Angat Program," a program to help small entrepreneurs funded by the country's tycoons (would you believe that?).

To say it was a strange speech is an understatement. But perhaps not really, given Duterte's preference for extemporaneous, often rambling speeches which spill out the things that dominate his thoughts at that time. He set aside, even ridiculed, his prepared two-page speech which he said would just take two minutes to read. Instead he talked for nearly an hour and a half, discussing the state of the nation more than his official SONA did last July. (<https://pcoo.gov.ph/presidential-speech/speech-of-president-rodriigo-roa-duterte-during-the-launching-of-the-go-negosyos-pilipinas-ang-at-lah-at-program/>)

After the perfunctory "congratulations at mabuhay kayong lahat," he said: "Now, I'd like to talk also about my personal heartaches and all." Before an audience of mostly big-business bigwigs and ambassadors — the kind of crowd wearing designer \$1,000 suits and Patek Philippe wrist watches — Duterte related how the gutter of Philippine society looks — and his frustration of not being able to clean it up after two years of trying. He described the things that have made him angry:

How he got to be interested personally in getting Pagcor to increase drastically its grants to government hospitals, only to discover that a hospital for wounded soldiers (V. Luna Medical Center) was ridden with corruption, overpricing several times even the prosthetics for soldiers who lost a leg or arm in battle against the IS-linked Muslim insurgents in Marawi City.



Big-business bigwigs laughing at Duterte's joke during his speech at Pilipinas Angat Program's launch.

How over 1,000 policemen and soldiers have been killed in his war against drugs, yet the “pretty boys of other countries” accuse him of wide-scale extrajudicial killings. How a pregnant prosecutor just happened to be buying something at a convenience store, and was killed by hold-up men, who needed money to get their fix. How after one crime, a gang goes on to rape a blind woman and her daughter-in-law, with her two children having to witness these. How a policeman's family goes hungry, when a suspected criminal he arrests files a counter-charge, with the law requiring him to be suspended from the service. How one unidentified judge in Manila who heard the cases filed by the police against a thousand drug pushers, dismissed all of them.

How the Communist Party, despite its claim to want peace, “has killed so many thousand soldiers, barangay captains, innocent civilians, suspected of being agents of the military.” Duterte even spoke about the plight of OFWs: “Look at the so many Filipinas beaten, placed inside a refrigerator, who had sent money to their children back home. That is the reason why I rage.”

In that speech of 8,000 words, Duterte's statements over quitting had about 110 words. He related how at an Armed Forces command conference he said: “Guys, I want you to know that I am thinking of stepping down because I'm tired. While I am not against or angry against anybody, my chase against graft and corruption seems to be endless and it has contaminated almost all government departments and offices.”

“If you think there is somebody more competent, then by all means, replace me and put him in power. Or a group of persons who you think could bring prosperity to this nation, then do it because I said I'm tired and I think I cannot fulfill the promise of ending all these problems.”

And then after relating the country's other huge problems, the wily rascal in Duterte says: “I have nothing against Robredo. But I do not think she can improve on anything here. Of course, she will deny it, but the hotbed of shabu in the past years is Naga City. Or do you want a military junta?”

That “j” word must have sent shivers down the spines of the big businessmen audience. I would think all of them suddenly had a thought: “I better support this son-of-a-bitch more.” I even think they appreciated this president for his candor. With Speaker Gloria

Macapagal-Arroyo, much respected by the business community for her economic management during her presidency, at the stage nodding so often in agreement with Duterte, that event even galvanized the tycoons' support for this anti-oligarch president. So, do you think Duterte is really serious in saying he'll resign? The Yellows have been praying novenas for that to happen of course. You judge.

Rebuttal, if I may

This newspaper's editorial yesterday read: "Make no mistake about it: Mocha Uson is a social media phenomenon with her legion of followers. She can be an effective influencer in any information campaign aiming to reach the larger masses of the Filipino people. She can do that as a hired media practitioner for this administration without being on top of the government information apparatus, for which she is unqualified."

It didn't cross the editorial writer's mind: If Mocha becomes a "hired media practitioner," won't she be a paid hack? And if she becomes a media mercenary, won't the Yellows offer her a bigger fee, for which she has the prerogative to accept? Duterte's getting her into his government as soon he assumed power was a stroke of genius. Now you want her fired?

At any rate, I don't think it's the business of a newspaper to declare if it is pro- or anti- a president, or whoever the powerful for that matter. It is pathetic for it to justify its articles and opinion columns as helping the President the best way it can "by pointing out and writing about the excesses in his government, especially those that are committed by people closely around him."

It is not a newspaper's job to help or help a president. Just get your reporters and editors to do their job. If they are sloppy in their work or are obviously biased, fire them. Let your opinion writers do their jobs, but if they're spreading lies in their columns disguised as opinion, fire them.

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