

By Remedios F. Marmoleño

Governance in a democratic government is most effective when the citizens become engaged in how things are run. What I am saying is that in a democratic government the people should take seriously the principle inherent in the statement about democracy being a type of government “of, for and by the people”.

Some presidents may have the best interests of the country in mind and in goodwill we will grant them that. On the other hand, not one single individual, in spite of good intentions, can in reality determine on his own how to achieve that which is good for the majority. It takes a lot of chutzpah to believe that one is capable of doing that.

That is why we have what is called “separation of powers” among the three branches in the kind of government we have today in the Philippines. Not to stop one branch from exercising its power but to consult each other on what is ultimately good for the country.

But when we have one branch subservient to another branch for reasons of political interest, can the good of the country be the upper most motive for decision making? And even if it is, can we rely that the wisdom and the good intentions of any one branch are sufficient?

I am not baying at the moon when I question the need for a declaration of a Mindanao-wide martial law. But there are questions that cannot be set aside.

The President submits to Congress a justification for the declaration of martial law and the president may have that martial law in place for at least 60 days whether Congress agrees or not. But PRRD has publicly stated that, not only will the martial law apply to Mindanao but may include the Visayas as well and may even apply to the whole country; not only for 60 days but may even be up to the end of his term. Now if this is not chutzpah, tell me what it is.

Do we have laws in our country that apply to the declaration of martial law? If there are, how

can one man, even if he was elected with an impressive mandate, make statements that contradict what the law says?

I know that PRRD has an on-going “cold war” with some media outfits. (He is like the US president in this regard.) Assuming that the PDI was correct in quoting him, what can we make of this president who said: “ If I think you should die, you will die. If you fight us, you will die. If there’s an open defiance , you will die and if it means many people dying, so be it.”

Knowing that a person with this attitude is at the helm, what can we citizens do to be engaged?