



***The Activist*, by Antonio R Enriquez. University of Santo Tomas Publishing House, Ermita, Manila. c 2011, 252 pages.**

The *Activist* chronologically unfolds three historic events in one of the turning phases of Philippine history – the Martial Law. Those events include the Constitutional Convention, the imposition of Presidential Decree 1081 and the National Election. It also cites the outstanding crimes throughout the dictatorial regime which have remained unresolved.

The novel covers a majestic womb to tomb story of a true activist introduced as Lorenz Diaz in revisiting the political leadership of the great Mayor Cesar Cortez Climaco of the city of Zamboanga who unfortunately died in the hands of an assassin on November 14, 1984. In its presentation, it unveils the alpha and the omega of the Filipino struggle during Martial Law years against the impositions of President Ferdinand E Marcos through Proclamation 1081 beginning September 21, 1972 up to January 17, 1981 when it was lifted and beyond.

Fifty-one concise chapters unfold an interesting piece that could keep eyeballs, follow through the crimes that had drawn varied responses from the Filipino leaders throughout the martial law years, activism among them. At age 51, the main character, Lorenz Diaz, Jr., would have a president as his political opponent who was destined to perpetuate himself into a dictatorial leadership sacrificing the spirit of democracy of the Filipino nation. Chapter 1 exposes the culprit whose whims and caprices made democracy to shine no more over the Filipino nation for more than eight years. Chapters 2 to 14 unveil the historic spirit of activism in the form of an altruistic response to a common need. This response holds true to the story of the early beginnings of the family of Lorenzo Diaz and Nora Torres who instituted the foundations of education of the early inhabitants of Zamboanga.

Chapters 15 to 34 open the story of the challenges to a constitutional convention delegate whose opposition stance would afford him the prize of the torture chambers. Though thrown in jail with the criminals where food and limited time for sleep would consequently reduce one's physical stature, a gallant activist, Attorney Lorenz Diaz, Jr would emerge. It was the dictator's design which turned a failure in putting an end to

the source of life of an oppositionist through incarceration. Incarceration taught Lorenz Jr the lessons that transformed him into a noble activist.

Chapters 35 to 37 expose the activist to various threats through which he earned the reason to run for an office at the national political arena – the “Batasang Pambansa.” It was an office where the political activists, Ninoy Aquino among them, courageously risked their lives against the head of state, Ferdinand E Marcos.

Chapter 38 presents the might behind the dictatorial regime. It was the might of the United States of America, the foremost tormentor of the communists in Asia. Chapter 39 to 40 provides the details of a local leadership that would bring Lorenz Jr the opportunity to compare notes with the ultimate oppositionist, Ninoy Aquino, against the Dictator Ferdinand E Marcos. Ninoy was once at the mercy of the goons of the Marcos’ cronies. In Chapter 43, Lorenz Jr must have had unconsciously sited the path through which he was destined to pass through. Talking to Ninoy Aquino he said “You can bet your last centavo that those bastards won’t touch you so long as Marcos is alive!” But to the fatal fang of the lapdog of Ferdinand Marcos, local oppositionists were ambushed, abducted and detained. Who else could initiate for a rescue but the local constituents themselves whose support from the Jesuits both of the local and national offices amplified a voice that moved the dictator for the release of Lorenz Jr from a military camp in Cebu.

Chapters 46 to 49 present the story of the last homecoming of Mayor Lorenz Jr to Zamboanga City but not the last for his political harassment – the house arrest that neither stopped him from his political pursuits nor paralyzed his political activism. Chapter 50 opens the story of the assassination of Ninoy Aquino that kindled the fire of People Power through the EDSA Revolution. The power that was strong enough to cut the political support of the United States of American; the power that was strong enough to cut the political support of the United States of America, the MIGHT that perpetrated Ferdinand E Marcos to a dictatorial reign.

The historic event in Chapter 51 substantiates what Lorenz Jr shared with Ninoy Aquino – “you can bet your last centavo that those bastards won’t touch you so long as Marcos is alive! But once Marcos loses control, anything can happen to you”. The great activist, the outstanding mayor of Zamboanga City died in the hands of an assassin on November 14, 1984.