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## **ESTRADA'S DAYS ARE NUMBERED**

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Estrada has to resign in order to assuage the people's outrage and avoid worse consequences to himself for disgracing the nation. Alternatively, as suggested by Mrs. Aquino, he may take an indefinite leave of absence because he is morally, politically, mentally and physically sick.

Everyday that he remains in power, the economic and political crisis of the ruling system worsens and the people and the broad united front of organized forces intensify their efforts to remove him from power.

There is a general understanding among the organized masses, religious institutions, business and professional groups, opposition parties and government personnel that a crescendo of militant mass protests must be undertaken nationwide in order to compel Mr. Estrada to resign.

The firm consensus is that Estrada must be removed from power because of his flagrant immorality, corruption, cronyism, mismanagement and plunder of the economy, all-out war policy and human rights violations.

Estrada has served his imperialist masters well by pushing the ratification of the Visiting Forces Agreement, by further "liberalizing" the economy for the benefit of the multinational banks and firms and intensifying the oppression and exploitation of the people, especially the workers and peasants.

But he has become such a big liability to the ruling system that even his imperialist masters are already junking him. An important indication of this development is the IMF's withdrawal of the "seal of good housekeeping" from the regime.

As a consequence, the Estrada regime cannot access foreign loans and float bonds abroad. The Standard and Poor's ratings have gone negative for the regime. There is already a credit squeeze on it.

The IMF, World Bank, Japan Bank for International Cooperation and the Asian Development Bank all agree that the regime cannot comply with the limit on deficit-spending because of its unbridled corruption.

The cronies and multiple families of Estrada are wantonly involved in overpriced contracts with the government, underpriced sale of state assets, tax evasion, technical smuggling, cutting into pork barrel funds and raiding social insurance, housing and other public funds. Moreover, the all-out war policy of Estrada is draining a huge amount of resources.

Estrada has the illusion that if the mass protests were stopped and if he would have to deal only with an impeachment process he would be able to control and end the process to his advantage by accelerating the release of the presidential pork barrel to the congressmen and further running afoul of the IMF limit on deficit-spending.

But as soon as the money is released, the congressmen can easily lose their "loyalty" to Estrada. They know that money for them will become scarce because of IMF restrictions and the falling peso. They can also start to resent the insulting presumption of the supercorrupt Estrada that they are corrupt and that he is entitled to a monopoly of the pork barrel because he has a monopoly of honesty.

The impeachment process has the minimum potential of ventilating the evils of the regime for several months as well as the maximum potential of stimulating the defection of Estrada's allies in Congress who might be swayed by mounting mass protests of the people or by the signals of the US and the IMF that it is time to drop Estrada.

Even former president Aquino's call for Estrada to take a leave of absence to prevent him from interfering in the impeachment process, works against him. Such a call can encourage some senators and congressmen to disengage from their alliance with Estrada. Indeed, it is necessary to prevent Estrada from being in a position to control the impeachment process.

The people are eager to get rid of Estrada. In this connection, the call for snap election by senators Roco and Enrile is deemed as distracting. But even such a call implies a repudiation of Estrada. Other senators and congressmen can echo it to distance themselves from Estrada.

In a roundabout way, by accusing former president Ramos of plotting to undertake arson and bombings to destabilize the regime, Estrada has threatened to disrupt the mass protests and attack the people. But the threat is futile and self-defeating because arson and bombings by Gen.

Lacson and Calimlim and their agents will only displease his imperialist masters, especially foreign investors.

High-ranking and police officers are already receiving definite signals from the US that it is time for Estrada to go. The troops and policemen are becoming restive from the effects of the economic and financial crisis on their pay checks. When national security adviser General Aguirre raves that the troops will shed blood for Estrada, he forgets how the troops deserted Marcos in 1986 and Suharto of Indonesia recently.

Neither a bloodbath occurred against the people in the bid of Marcos or Suharto to retain power nor a successful military coup to depose them was undertaken. It sufficed that the military and police officers refused to follow orders of the incumbent president to stop the mass protest actions with all-out brute force by gunfire.

Once the mass protest actions acquire gigantic proportions as in the 1983-86 period, the imperialist masters of Estrada will hasten his disposal, not by a military coup but by further tightening the credit squeeze and pushing retired and active generals to withdraw their support for him and speak up against him. Since the 1980's, the US in its "democracy" mythmaking has had a preference for the credit squeeze and political pressure rather than military coups in disposing of its discredited puppet presidents.

The thieving, gambling and carousing days of Estrada at public expense are numbered, as the people rise up and even his imperialist masters are compelled to dump him. #

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