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COMMENT ON THE IMPENDING FALL OF ESTRADA AND THE RISE OF MACAPAGAL

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Estrada is already finished, as a consequence of the disintegration of the LAMP coalition in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The numbers in Congress have drastically changed against him, so much so that he must resign soon.

The top brass of the Armed Forces of the Philippines is already under orders from the Pentagon and in particular the Hawaii-based US CINCPAC to tell Estrada that it is better for him to resign than to resist the popular movement against him.

The only choice left for him is to head off a Senate trial, strike a deal with his vice-president for some amount of protection and resign ala Nixon or to protract the Senate trial as long as possible and face worse consequences to himself.

To ensure Estrada's resignation soon, it is still necessary to intensify the nationwide mass protests, possibly culminating in the direct encirclement of the presidential palace by one million people. On his part, Estrada should realize by now that every day that he delays his resignation is a day closer to the concentration of the outraged masses around his palace.

While he clings to the presidential chair, Estrada remains the target of the concentrated fire of the broad united front and the people. A slackening of the mass protests demanding his removal from power would give him some leeway for maneuver.

Macapagal will start her presidency from a weak and vulnerable position if she condones the crimes of Estrada in exchange for his resignation. Moreover, she will be in the morass of a bankrupt government that has to undertake a program of austerity at the expense of the people.

As president, Macapagal can easily become the people's enemy overnight because the so-called alternative national agenda of her "united opposition" does not reflect the broad united front against Estrada and does not address the basic demands of the people for national liberation and democracy. Until now, we have not heard from Macapagal any firm assurance that her policies will be any different from those of Estrada.

She knows very well that Bayan, KMU, KMP, Gabriela, Anakbayan, LFS, CEGP, Karapatan and other patriotic and progressive forces are actively in the broad united front for the removal of Estrada from power. But she has publicly avoided referring to any policy change that would please them.

So far, she has also failed to mention anything agreeable to the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, like justice and indemnification for the victims of human rights violations, the release of political prisoners and the possible resumption of peace negotiations with the NDFP in accordance with The Hague Joint Declaration.

Macapagal succeeds to the presidency while the ruling system of big compradors and landlords continues to be crisis-ridden and unstable. She will not fare any better than Estrada by being more articulate than he in pushing the policies of the IMF, World Bank and WTO and probably using cold war language against the mass movement of workers and peasants.

"Free trade" globalization, the fancy term for neocolonialism and neoliberalism, will make any puppet president weak and isolated because it ceaselessly worsens the social and economic crisis and unleashes terrible suffering on the people. The severe contradictions among the reactionaries will continue.

Macapagal will not be immune to the consequences of the economic and political crisis of the ruling system. She can easily go the ignominious way of Estrada if she fails to satisfy the basic demands of the people. By becoming president, she assumes responsibilities for which she would be accountable to the people and to the revolutionary movement. #

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