

# Some Notes on the Current Philippine Political Situation

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The sudden death of Jesse Robredo, the former Secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) in the middle of August this year had made strong reminder to the whole officialdom of President Benigno Aquino (PNoy) of the manner to achieve reforms and good governance through authentic service and accountability. Robredo's type of leadership is leadership by example. The abovementioned qualities are the actualizations of the EDSA I spirits which can only be internalized by well-meaning people and individuals who are determined to stop the return of any sign of the dark days of the Martial Law and the fascist regime 40 years ago. Robredo had clearly showed the nation these qualities in his life but more on his death.

The just concluded period of filing of Certificate of Candidacy (CoCs) for those running in the midterm election (2013) has been very revealing. There has been no period of the history of the nation when those who entered Philippine politics are doing it as much by families, in spite of the anti-dynasty law in the 1987 Constitution. But to date, this Constitutional mandate has not been implemented by the government, simply by not legislating the implementing rules and guidelines because of the self destructiveness it will bring to the political dynasty of politicians in the government. This is simply saying something on the kind of politics in the country which is not only controlled by the economic elite in close connivance with the global capitalists, but also by elite political families and warlords.

The signing of the preliminary peace agreement between the Philippine government (GPH) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in which both panels agreed to the creation of the New Autonomous Political Entity (NAPE) called Bangsamoro. They have created a 15-person transition Commission to chart the coverage of the entity and its power and wealth sharing. It is very historical at least between and among the panels, but the people up to the current stage are kept in a frozen animation. It has been promised that a plebiscite will be launched to consult the people regarding this agreement.

Currently also, the President has just signed into law a Cyber Crime Prevention Law which can punish anybody using the electronic technology which the government considers destructive. Many are saying that this is Electronic Martial law.

With the abovementioned developments, one can easily connect the role of the Cyber Crime Prevention Law in pursuing the "Straight Path" which the President has been telling our people. Indeed, the country is showing signs of treading the path of the President, which is the path worst than those darkest period of our democracy.

## **THE LOST SPIRIT OF EDSA PEOPLE POWER : THE PNOY ADMINISTRATION AT FULL REVERSE SPEED**

The sudden death of Jesse Robredo was a great loss not only to his family but for the whole nation for he had embodied the EDSA spirit from the very start of this work as Secretary of the DILG. Such dynamic spirit, which put the PNoy administration in power, has long been disregarded and forgotten. It was because of such genuine service that although he belonged to the President's party (the ruling party) that the Philippine National Police (PNP) - which the Constitution says should be under the Head of the DILG - was never given to Jesse Robredo and worst, until his death he was never confirmed, making him not a full-pledged Head of a major Department. And before his death, he was in the middle of an investigation case involving the most trusted person of PNoy (his deputy and was put in charge of the PNP by the President) regarding major case of corruption. And worst still was the strong information that he was about to be replaced because the role of the Head of the DILG is very crucial in the 2013 midterm elections.

Then his death.

The actions and concerns of the President and his Cabinet was very opposite to the signs they showed when Robredo was alive. The immense popularity expressly showed by the peoples from all walks of life to Robredo has surprised the President and his Cabinet, that was why they eagerly tried to identify with him at last. They all accompanied the dead up to his burial place.

With the mid-elections coming, they tried to emulate the late Robredo with his "*tsinelas* leadership" (*tsinelas* is a footwear worn by ordinary people) and other values for their own projection. But then, since it was not really coming from inside, they easily forget about the good leadership traits, especially when news coming from the media about Robredo had become far in between. These politicians have already gotten what they wanted when they tried to identify with Robredo - a high popularity rating in the survey which was conducted exactly at the time of the wake of Robredo (August 24-27, 2012).

For two years and until his death, Robredo was not confirmed to his post but Mar Roxas, the President of the Liberal Party (ruling party) who has replaced Robredo was confirmed in two days and controls both the local government and the Philippine National Police.

There has never been a situation such as this even during the fascist and the period of dictatorship. Political and economic empowerment have been totally reversed and democracy has been blatantly degraded.

It is very hard to think that a popularly elected President can allow such thing to happen - or maybe it is because he is popular that he thinks he can easily do such things.

It has already been an established fact that the Philippine politics has been alternatively controlled by the few elites who also controlled the country's economy. The control and management have been done by a class which has dominated the country. Today, this kind of politics will be a thing of the past since it will be families of the elite (not class) now which control and manage the country.

Even the remaining place where the ordinary people can participate in politics and which the framers of the 1987 Constitution had enshrined into the basic law of the land had been taken over by the elites. The Party List Law which assures the marginalized sectors in the country are represented (farmers, workers, fisherfolks, etc) have been de-marginalized and bastardized. The Party List representations sitting in Congress and those who want to run in the midterm elections (2013) have their nominees among the members of their families and they are coming from the elites.

The proliferation of dynasty of families in the country's politics is showing signs of undemocratic governance because it limits the options of the people/electorate to choose their own candidates. The elite families control the resources including the media and hence people are put on a situation where they can have an informed decision.

### **PEACE AGREEMENT : From Where and To Whom ?**

As mentioned in the earlier part of this paper, PNoy has announced in a press conference that the government and the MILF panels have just signed a preliminary peace agreement in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, the host country of the Peace Talks. It will be more than four years (August 2008) when the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE) was about to be signed by both panels (the government represented by the previous government) when it was stopped by the Supreme Court because nobody knew about the content, and the very peoples which had been discussed in their talks and agreement, were kept in the dark. The Supreme Court ultimately declared the so-called agreement unconstitutional. The about to be signed accord was then called Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain or MOA-AD and the areas covered were called Bangsamoro Juridical Entity.

The present document that both panels have just signed is called preliminary agreement on the New Autonomous Political Entity (NAPE) which they called Bangsamoro. The so-called signed agreement included the areas which will be covered newly the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) comprising 5 provinces and 1 city and the 6 municipalities in Lanao del Norte and 735 villages in different provinces and towns in Mindanao, which are the same core areas covered by the BJE in the MOA-AD in 2008. It was also announced that the panels will create a 15-person transition Commission who will discuss the details of the agreement on power and wealth sharing among others. The process will end with a plebiscite when people in the affected areas will have their voices heard.

Meanwhile, the President has been disregarding the laws or promises he made when he appointed his favorite friend as Acting Governor in the failed project in the ARMM. The same Acting Governor had just filed his Certificate of Candidacy to run for the same position, he was appointed but does not show any sign to resign from his appointment post. The obvious is very glaring, that is using his appointed position over his opponents. The President's appointed OIC had been using PNoy as reason for his running in the ARMM gubernatorial race despite the pronouncement of the President and the late Sec. Robredo that he would not run in 2013 Elections. Again, this is very revealing in terms of this accountability. He is running because he wants to serve the President and not the people of ARMM. Here, we do not need to look for reason why the ARMM has failed and will definitely fail.

Definitely, the President needs somebody to pave the way to the straight path of having the new juridical identity - the Bangsamoro. This task now has been started in the name of the peoples in the ARMM and even outside the region.

During this period, the Moro people should start to get use of being called the Filipino people in the Bangsamoro. PNoy was very clear that under the Bangsamoro agreement, the nation remains as one and all the peoples are all called Filipinos including those in the Bangsamoro. Historical facts especially in Mindanao will prove this process has been very difficult if not impossible.

## **THE DECLARATION OF E-MARTIAL LAW**

When the President signed the Cyber Crime Law, he also put the country into virtual dictatorial regime. Those who are using the advances of the info technology like the internet, social networking, etc will be deprived of due process when they practice their freedom of speech and information because if they write articles and documents in the internet which the President's people do not find favorable, they can be accused of libel as violation of the Cyber Crime Prevention Law and still can be accused of a different violation on the country's criminal law. But the Cyber Crime busters can immediately remove or deprive anybody of the information by blocking or removing the materials from the public without due process. They can act both as virtual judges and executioners.

The overwhelming negative reactions of peoples from various walks of life clearly shows that they were not consulted by the President and his people when they crafted the law - again a very opposite on his promise of consulting the people in all his actions because they (the people) are his bosses.

Meanwhile, the Freedom of Information Bill (FOI) has not moved any further from its First Reading in both houses of Congress. This clearly shows which direction the PNoy administration is leading into.

## **CONCLUSION**

The President's term is on the middle of his six years term but anybody can already define what he meant by walking to the straight path very different from his very unpopular predecessor but the path is becoming parallel from the previous regime only that it is becoming worst.

The midterm elections of 2013 will become a referendum for the 2016 Presidential elections and the peoples' attitude towards PNoy and his Administration. The people will definitely have difficulty in choosing who will they elect from the Aquino administration or their opponents, who are also identifying themselves with the administration.

The political set-up of the country is definitely stunting the growth of democracy. The spirit of EDSA is becoming harder to see in the current administration but had been the main reason when people elected PNoy to change the past regime and correct their errors. PNoy greatly misinterpreted his popularity as his license to do undemocratic decisions and expect the people to follow him. His straight path is becoming clear by the day. It is path to heaven for the elites and the straight path to hell for the marginalized, deprived and the oppressed people of the country.

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