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Freudian Slip or Self-fulfilling Prophecy?

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- When former President Cory Aquino passed away last August 1, 2009, some media people made erroneous reports saying that it was President Gloria Arroyo who died.

The first came from Lala Rimando of Newsbreak magazine who reported that Gloria Arroyo passed away. Rimando later apologized saying, "I'm guilty. I killed our president," which was posted on abs-cbnnews.com. "I wrote an online story about the passing of a former president but inadvertently referred to the current one who's still very much alive in portions of the story. Instead of Mrs Aquino, some sentences had 'Mrs Arroyo'..." Freudian slip?

Then in a live ABS-CBN TV coverage showing the military honor guard waiting for Cory's body to arrive at De La Salle Greenhills, the caption says, "MILITARY HONORS PARA KAY GINANG ARROYO, INIHAHANDA NA."

Then during Cory's wake, a story posted on Philstar.com says, "Wearing a white blazer suit, President Arroyo went straight to view the coffin of former President Arroyo and offered a short prayer before joining Senator Noynoy Aquino, who received the president in behalf of the Aquino family."

And the day after Cory's burial, Manila Bulletin published a photo with the caption: "WITHUTMOST CARE. Military honor guard carefully moves the coffin of President Arroyo out of the Manila Cathedral." Was it a self-fulfilling prophecy?

Was there a deliberate effort to put Gloria in a bad light? We can only speculate. But one thing went unnoticed: ABS-CBN and Manila Bulletin did not apologize for these mistakes. It was also evident that nobody was fired or reprimanded publicly which in a way suggests that the publishers might have condoned the faux pas. I could just imagine the chuckling amongst the media top honchos. Why not? After all, the Arroyos have dealt them with hard-hitting blows including more than 40 libel lawsuits filed against them by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo. Well, it's payback time, folks.

In an attempt to downplay the errors, Gloria's spin doctors issued a statement which says that they believe that these were "honest mistakes." But what else can they say... or do? It's best to just forget about it and move on with the affairs of state.

But there was one event that put Gloria in a very bad light. She just finished her working visit President Barack Obama at the White House when news of Cory's death reached her. But for a couple of days, she went on with her scheduled activities. On August 3, she decided to cut her visit short and fly back to Manila to attend Cory's wake.

However, just before flying back home, Gloria and her entourage of about 30 people went to New York City's upscale French restaurant, Le Cirque, for dinner. They spent a whopping \$20,000! That's almost one million pesos,

enough to feed 100,000 poor and hungry Filipinos.

On August 7, the New York Post published on its front page an article, "Eat and Drink," which says that Gloria and her entourage were "enjoying the good life" and "ordered several bottles of very expensive wine, pushing the dinnertab up to \$20,000." Indeed, it was a sumptuous dinner that not even King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette could have afforded it during their time. After all, didn't Marie Antoinette tell the hungry French people to eat cake when they couldn't afford to buy bread?

Gloria's expensive excursion to a posh French restaurant in New York City did not bode well with the people. It was a crass display of insensitivity to Filipinos who were grieving the death of their beloved Cory. Gloria's haggard "grieving" appearance at the wake was probably the result of eating too much caviar and drinking too much champagne -- frolicking while her country was mourning. It was a fake grief and they could see through her.

Cory's nine-hour 20-kilometer funeral procession from the Manila Cathedral to the Manila Memorial Park was joined by more than 300,000 people, the largest in Philippine history. The mourning people -- a lot of whom wore yellow, Cory's color -- braved the rain to bid farewell to their heroine.

It was a final "show of force" by Cory's loyal followers, many of whom have participated in the "People Power"

revolution of 1986. It gave a strong signal to Gloria that Cory's followers would protect Cory's legacy -- freedom and democracy -- which are embodied in the 1987 constitution, oftentimes referred to as the "People Power" or Cory Constitution.

And with Cory's passing, the political landscape has changed irreversibly. Any attempt to amend the 1987 constitution now would spark the ire of the people which could lead to another "people power" revolt. And Gloria, smart as she is, wouldn't dare touch Cory's constitution, not now, not during her presidency.

With the 1987 constitution untouched, any attempt by Gloria to stay in power beyond June 2010 would be futile. The people would resist it. Charter change is not in the cards anymore, not while Gloria is still in power.

And this brings to mind whether the media's "honest mistakes" announcing Gloria's death were the result of Freudian slip or self-fulfilling prophecy. I believe that it was Freudian slip. However, I also believe that it was a self-fulfilling prophecy -- that of Gloria's imminent "political death" in 10 months. Cory's death has sealed Gloria's fate.

There is an adage that says, "Quit while you're ahead." A second version says, "Quit while you're a head." Marie Antoinette had a chance to quit while she was a head but she didn't. It's a lesson that Gloria should not forget.