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The Glory of EDSA, the EDSA of Gloria

SACRAMENTO, CALIF., Mar. 03 (PinoyGlobal) - Last February 24, 2010, on the 24th anniversary of the People Power Revolution of 1986, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo delivered her final message to commemorate EDSA 1. She repeated the same cliché that she had been telling the people in the past several years: “The world embraced EDSA 1 in 1986. The world tolerated EDSA 2 in 2001. The world will not forgive an EDSA 3 but would instead condemn the Philippines as a country whose political system is hopelessly unstable.”

She said that the “glorious revolution” of EDSA 1 had deteriorated into partisanship over the years. “The Philippines has come a long way since 1986. We regained our freedom and our national pride, but somewhere along the way we became complacent. People Power gained a partisan meaning that started to divide the nation once more,” she said in her speech.

The glory of EDSA 1

Those who have been at Epifanio delos Santos Avenue (EDSA) on that fateful day 24 years ago would agree that it was indeed a “glorious revolution.” They would agree that they have regained our freedom and our national pride. And they would also agree that the world embraced EDSA 1. Indeed, not only did the world embrace EDSA 1, it emulated EDSA 1. EDSA 1 inspired the people of Eastern Europe to break loose from the yoke of communism. And like dominoes, the Soviet client states freed themselves one by one and established democratic governments. That was the glory

of EDSA 1.

EDSA 1 restored the democratic institution that we lost when the dictator Ferdinand Marcos imposed one-man rule under martial law in 1972. Cory Aquino, the widow of the martyr Ninoy Aquino, took over the presidency. The following year a new constitution was fashioned with a provision that would prevent any form of dictatorship from emerging again.

The new republic under the 1987 constitution survived several coup attempts during Cory’s presidency and stabilized during President Fidel V. Ramos’ term. But Ramos’ successor, President Joseph “Erap” Estrada didn’t do too well. Once again, corruption started to show its ugly head in the government.

The EDSA 2 of Gloria

After 18 months in office, Erap was ousted under “mysterious” circumstances. On January 19, 2001, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Angelo Reyes withdrew his support for Erap and joined Gloria’s supporters. Gloria’s group then linked up with people who were rallying against Erap at the EDSA Shrine. However, they were unaware that something was cooking up. And -- bingo! -- you have “EDSA 2 People Power.”

The following morning, Gloria faxed a memo to Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. informing him that Erap “is permanently incapable of performing the duties of his office resulting in his

permanent disability to govern and serve his unexpired term." An hour later, at high noon, Gloria took her oath as President before Davide. That was the EDSA 2 of Gloria.

Was EDSA 2 a "people power" in the true meaning of EDSA 1? Or was it a coup d'etat? If EDSA 1 was the "Glorious Revolution," EDSA 2 may very well be called "Gloria's Revolution," or, more aptly, "Gloria's Counter-revolution." Isn't that what really happened in EDSA 2?

What we gained in EDSA 1 was reversed in EDSA 2. Within four days after Gloria took over the presidency, the first act of corruption was allegedly made by no other than her old friend, the newly appointed Secretary of Justice. It was downhill since then. Corruption scandal after corruption scandal followed. As poll surveys showed a few years later, Gloria presided over the "most corrupt government in Asia" and she was deemed as the "most corrupt President in the history of the Philippines." Once again, the country was divided. People rallied against her and called for her resignation. Impeachment petitions were filed against her in Congress. However, her allies in Congress thrashed all the petitions.

EDSA 3

Gloria's oft-repeated cliché, "The world will not forgive an EDSA 3 but would instead condemn the Philippines as a country whose political system is hopelessly unstable," has been her defense against any attempt to remove her from

office. The truth is: the world couldn't care less if there was EDSA 3. The world has already condemned the Philippines long time ago as the "Sick Man of Asia." And, lately, derisively as the "Armpit of Asia." And the United Nations chastised Gloria's government for not doing anything to stop the extrajudicial killings and forced disappearances of dissenters, activists, and media people.

The Philippines doesn't need forgiveness, it needs redemption. It needs EDSA 3 to put the country back on the road to peace and progress, a detour from the road to perdition that Gloria's EDSA 2 has taken us. I am talking about a new "people power" revolution -- using ballots, not bullets -- at the polls on May 10, 2010.

The elections on May 10 would give the people a grand opportunity to change the government and unravel the Gordian knot of corruption and poverty. What the country needs is an "Alexander" who will not be deterred by the overwhelming power of those who will defend the status quo in a land ruled too long by plutocrats and kleptocrats. What the people need is a leader who is guided by the spirit of EDSA 1 and lead a peaceful "people power" revolution to free them from the yoke of poverty. That leader would emerge if the people would flex their collective strength at the polls on May 10 to elect the candidate who will fulfill the promises of EDSA 1 and not a candidate who will make promises to fulfill his personal ambitions.

That would be the glory of EDSA 3.