

The Historical Legacy of Former President Corazon Aquino

Saturday 8 August 2009, by [MELENCIO Sonny](#) (Date first published: 1 August 2009).

Statement issued by Sonny Melencio, Chairperson of the Partido Lakas ng Masa (Philippines), on the death of Former Philippines President Cory Aquino August 1, 2009.

While we commiserate with the grief experienced by many people over the death of former President Corazon Cojuangco Aquino, we have to put her legacy to the Filipino nation in historical perspective.

Cory Aquino was the icon of the revival of pre-dictatorial 'elite democracy' in the country. She was the symbol of a 'people power revolution' which deposed the dictator Marcos but failed to institute a people's power government. The governmental alliance that she established under her 'revolutionary government' quickly transformed into a government headed by elite groups previously persecuted by the Marcos dictatorship.

While Aquino was seen as leading the downfall of the much-hated Marcos dictatorship, it is classes and not individuals that make history. There were various factors and players at work who made the ouster of Marcos a reality. EDSA 1 itself was a confluence of a military mutiny and a people's uprising. The build-up to EDSA 1 was a series of protests, sacrifices, and small-scale rebellion led by the Left and other progressive forces. It is unfortunate, however, that the Left which has sacrificed the most during the period of the dictatorship, ended up 'politically isolated' due to errors related to its strategy and tactics.

The limitation of Aquino's elite democracy was showcased in the failure of the Aquino government to dispense justice even in the case of the assassination of her own husband, former Senator Ninoy Aquino; the assassination of labor leader Rolando Olalia and his driver; the assassination of student leader Lean Alejandro; the massacre of farmers at Mendiola... On the economic legacy, Aquino failed to uplift the conditions of the Filipino people by insisting on 100% regular payment of erroneous debts piled up during the period of the dictatorship. Aquino made automatic appropriations of debt-payment into a law and perpetrated the crisis of capital and resources that continued to impoverish the country and its people.

While we acknowledge Aquino's leading role in the EDSA uprising, we know she was a product of her time, her class and her upbringing. She was caged in by the economic and political forces that catapulted her to power. EDSA uprising started with a lot of promise; but it did not become an authentic revolution - there was no social change, no passing of power from the elite to the masa. It merely resurrected the old system where the elite and its various factions take turns in dominating the economic and political institutions in the country. In a sense, Gloria Macapagal's rise to power was a product of the limited and distorted character of Cory's 'revolution'.