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LIBERATION

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FM, Imelda & Ver plotted the slay

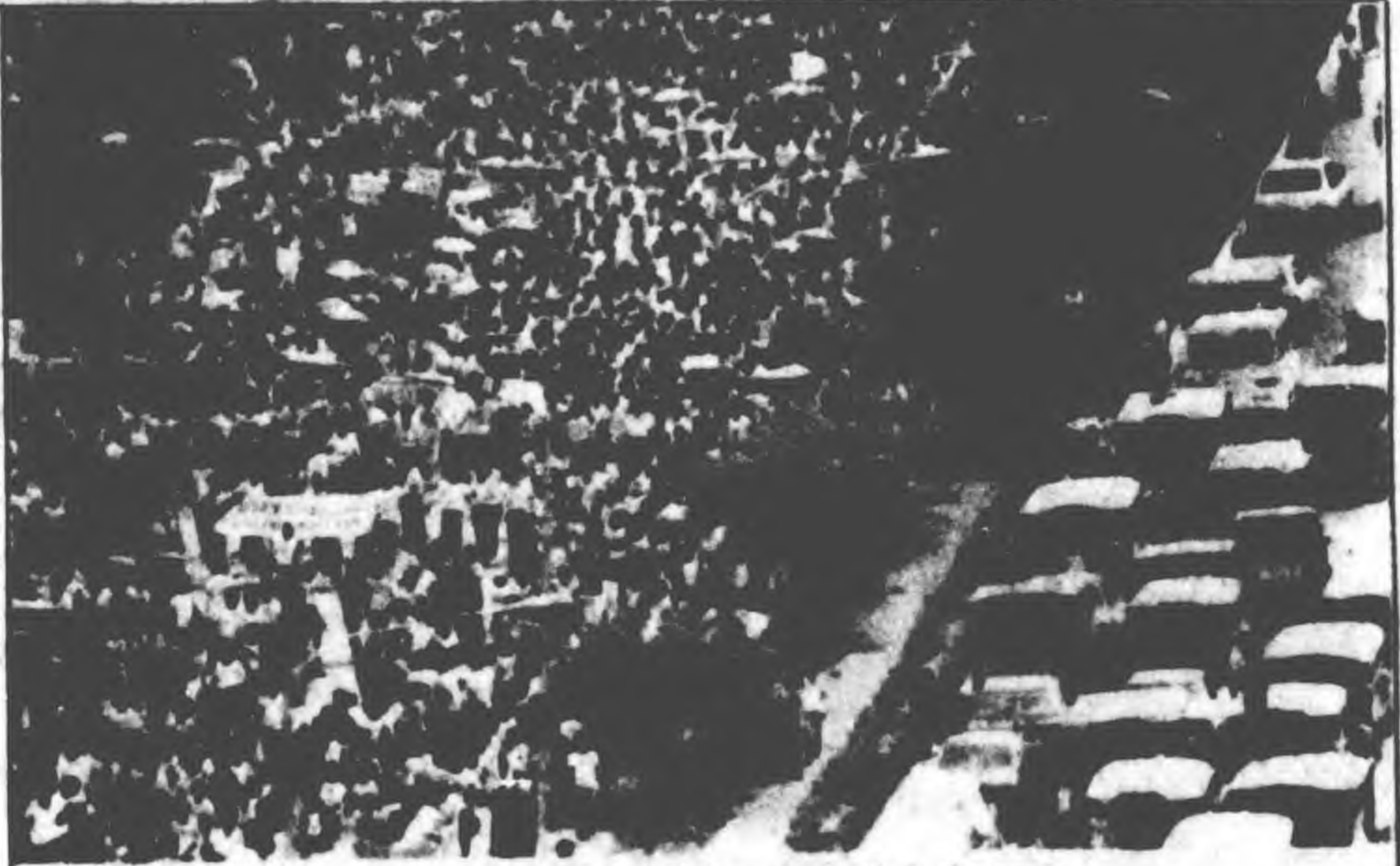
The dictator Ferdinand Marcos, his wife Imelda and AFP chief Gen. Fabian Ver stand out as the masterminds behind the assassination of former Senator Benigno Aquino Jr., the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Philippines revealed in its official publication *Ang Bayan*.

A secret report has come up with the name of a fourth mastermind: Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., coconut magnate and a top Marcos crony. See story on page 2.

The CPP analyzed the motives each one had in ordering the gunning of Aquino. Marcos had strong motives in physically eliminating him because Aquino was "a potent threat to (Marcos') continued hold on power." "Given the fast deteriorating economic and political crisis, the regime could not afford to have Aquino multiplying its problems," said the CPP. "In its desperation, the regime chose to assassinate him right at the airport, upon his arrival."

"It was possible that Aquino could be eliminated with finesse later, but if he were given the chance to regroup the legal opposition forces, and be in a position to effectively influence political developments in the country, this might be more difficult to do," said the CPP. "By then, the political consequences of murdering Aquino would be more immediate, clear and less manageable."

On the part of the "corrupt and ambitious" Imelda Marcos, the CPP said she also had her own selfish reasons >2



Aug. 28 mammoth procession: Forerunner of a brewing political storm

Ninoy Aquino's murder triggers huge protests

The murder of former Senator Benigno Aquino Jr. at the Manila International Airport on Aug. 21 drew out the long pent-up anger and disgust of the Filipino people against the Marcos regime.

Close to a million people from all walks of life throughout the country launched various forms of protest actions that vehemently condemned Aquino's brutal slaying, exposed the fascist nature of the regime, and demanded an impartial probe of the opposition leader's death and the resignation of top government and military leaders, primarily the President, the Cabinet, Estanislao Paredes

members and the heads of all major services of the armed forces.

Students launched boycotts of classes. A noise barrage was held in Bacolod City. Marches were organized. Defiant speeches and statements were issued by various groups and political personalities.

The popular actions dispelled the belief of some that the people have been silenced by the regime's policy of harsh repression and outright terrorism. On the other hand, the spontaneous and massive protest actions came as a respite to the tottering regime. >4



Gallery of rogues: Marcos, Imelda, Ver and Cojuangco had the strongest motives and unlimited means to kill their arch-enemy

Is Cojuangco one of the brains behind the rub-out?

The deadly hand of Eduardo Cojuangco Jr. in Aquino's slaying was bared by a man who called up the law office of Assemblyman Salvador Laurel on Aug. 24. The man identified himself as Tony Marquez but said this was not his real name. He said he was too scared to come to the office. Marquez revealed he was a businessman from Tarlac and close to Cojuangco.

Marquez said the killing of Aquino was planned right after the ex-senator announced he was returning to the Philippines. The group that planned it included Cojuangco, Gen. Fabian Ver and a certain Col. Mejia, said to be the provincial commander of Bulacan. Mejia was supposed to coordinate between the military and Cojuangco who was responsible for hiring the professional assassin.

The plotters had earlier talked to Marcos who was angry over Aquino's return because although Aquino was out of power, he posed a threat to the regime, Marquez said.

The planning meeting reportedly took place on June 8 at the United Coconut Planters Bank in Makati, where Cojuangco has a controlling interest. Marcos gave his clearance to the group, said Marquez. He quoted Marcos as saying in Tagalog, "*Babala na kaya.*" (It is up to you.)

Marquez disclosed that there were two other men present in the meeting, aside from Cojuangco, Ver and Mejia. He did not remember their names but said they were in Cojuangco's employ.

A friend of Marquez, a professional killer, was hired first to do the rub-out job. The man, who hails from Tarlac, begged off when he heard it was Aquino. "The deal was that the family of the assassin would be set up for life," Marquez said. "He was guaranteed safety after the act but he didn't know it was a double-cross."

Marquez added that the man who killed Aquino could not possibly afford a .357 magnum which is very expensive. He said it was the same planning group that tried to kill Assemblyman Emmanuel Pelaez, a vocal critic last year of the coconut monopoly of Cojuangco. "All those who tried to kill Pelaez are now dead."

It was Cojuangco who also recruited the witnesses against Aquino in the 1977 military trial which sentenced him to death by musketry. Cojuangco supplied the money and when the mercenary witnesses kept on coming back for more money, the coconut tycoon had them killed, reported Marquez.

Marquez noted that Aquino's slaying has a bearing on the presidential elections slated in 1987. Cojuangco is reportedly being groomed by his *padrino* Marcos to succeed him. "He (Cojuangco) is young and has plenty of money to spend. It is felt that he can beat all the candidates except Ninoy."

"Cojuangco is aware that if Aquino assumes power, his (Cojuangco's) head will roll," said Marquez. Although he is

the first cousin of Aquino's wife Cory, a family feud has split him from that branch of the family which lost political favor with Marcos due to its affiliations with Aquino.

Apparently, for Eduardo Cojuangco, politics is thicker than blood. His loyalty to Marcos is much more important than family relations. Such a loyalty has richly paid off. With Marcos' full backing and protection, Cojuangco ranks today as one of the dictator's biggest and most trusted business and financial partners and frontmen. The base of Cojuangco's wealth, power and prestige is the coconut industry where he exerts control through interlocking institutions like the United Coconut Oil Mills (UNICOM) and the United Coconut Planters Bank.

Even before martial law, Cojuangco already boasted of a bloody record of political assassinations. He commanded a private army which included the "Monkees," a band of army deserters responsible for the murder of militant peasants in his home region of Central Luzon. Backed by his army and his military connections in Camp Olivas, Pampanga, he won as Congressman through massive vote-buying and fraud.

It is an interesting coincidence that word is currently floating in Manila's business community that Cojuangco is the man to watch as a possible Marcos successor. In any case, more eyes will be watching him in the coming days as the fourth mastermind in the dastardly plot to assassinate Marcos' political archrival.

CPP... (continued from page 1)

for wanting Aquino out of the way. "Groomed to succeed her husband in the fascist regime, she rightly regarded Aquino as a major stumbling block to her ambitions were he allowed to return and regroup his political forces." Her blunt statement of a few days ago -- "If he (Aquino) comes back, he's dead" -- was "a threat and also a promise of what the regime intended to do."

As for Ver, whose sole qualification for his position as AFP chief of staff is his blind loyalty to Marcos, he did his master's bidding as usual. "He conspired with his master and took care of the details of eliminating Aquino."

The CPP also noted that the Reagan administration in the US had an "indirect responsibility" for the former solon's murder. "This results from its policy and concrete measures of almost unqualified political, military and economic support for the Marcos fascist puppet clique at the expense of the anti-Marcos oppositionists headed by Aquino."

"By its policy, the Reagan administration has actively encouraged the regime to intensify its campaign of repression

against the Filipino people," the CPP noted.

The CPP attacked the regime for shifting the blame of Aquino's slaying to others, particularly the CPP and the

New People's Army. The CPP said this was nothing new since on numerous occasions in the past, the regime has tried to besmirch the party and the NPA.

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Funeral procession: A long march for justice





End of a journey: *Prigita of peace returns home to meet violent death;*
 Reagan (lower right): *US military bases are primary consideration*

US whitewashes regime

The US government has virtually whitewashed the Marcos regime and absolved it of guilt in the Aquino assassination. The move is evidently designed to defuse local and international protests that have become so widespread and sharp, they threaten the stability of the pro-US regime. By bolstering its client state, the US hopes to assure the protection of its strategic military bases and massive investments in the Philippines.

An indication of US attempts to cover up the culpability of Marcos is the statement of President Reagan's chief spokesman issued on the morning right after the slaying, before any investigation had begun. White House Deputy Press Secretary Larry Speakes denied reports that Aquino was gunned down by his military escort. Speakes claimed that "embassy reporting indicates (such report) is erroneous."

On the same day, Speakes reaffirmed Reagan's visit to the Philippines this November, a move which patently underscored US continued support for Marcos.

Other US officials have pointed out the US' real interest in the matter. According to the *New York Times*, US officials have been stressing that "US ties with the Philippines went beyond relations with the Marcos government and have strategic and historic importance for the United States and its allies that must not be destroyed over the killing of Mr. Aquino."

The *Times* quoted the officials as saying that "whatever the role of the Philippine authorities in the killing, the US had to try to ensure that it retained air and naval bases in the Philippines and that the government was not overthrown by Communists."

In view of this, critics charge that the US State Department statement condemning Aquino's murder as a "cowardly and despicable act" which some interpret as a sign that the US has begun distancing itself from Marcos is actually a mere ploy (shur). The statement does not

detract from US condonation of the crime and the US' all-out support for its puppet regime.

In a press release, the Lakas ng Bayan (LABAN), Aquino's political party in the 1978 elections, said it was "unfair for the US State Department to prejudge the assassination by saying press reports implicating airport security men were erroneous." Noted LABAN, "Nothing precluded the State Department even in the name of good foreign relations from withholding judgment on a purely domestic matter like the execution of Senator Aquino."

LABAN noted that the precipitate haste with which the US government absolved the regime was because of the former's "principal interest in keeping the US bases in the Philippines."

Marcos has taken a direct hand in fully buttressing US rights to these bases. In June this year, in exchange for continued US military aid disguised as base rental, he granted to the US unhampered control and use of the bases, even to the point of storing deadly nuclear weapons.

In contrast to Marcos' ardent support of the bases, a United Press International dispatch reported that Aquino, "before returning to the Philippines, had testified before a committee of the US Congress that he is for the dismantling of those bases because they are not only inimical to the interest of the Filipino people but also to the self-interest of the United States." Previously, Aquino had been noncommittal on the matter.

To deflect criticisms leveled against US meddling in the Aquino case, US Embassy spokesman Al Croghan said "We are not interfering in the investigation or making comments on it."

Local news reports, however, claim otherwise. The *Tempe* tabloid reported on Aug. 26 that "the US government is furnishing Philippine authorities investigating the killing . . . full information on every aspect of the probe where it sought American assistance."



The orchestrated campaign to exonerate Marcos has been joined by rightwing organizations in the US. These are also trying to spread the Marcos line that the "radicals" killed the ex-senator. The *People's Voice* reported that in a TV program in the US, an American professor and a consultant of the Rand Corp. for the Philippines and Southeast Asia claimed that "radical elements in the Philippines had the most to gain by killing Aquino."

It is interesting to note that the Rand Corp. is a "think-tank" institute financed by the US Defense Department. It hires nonmilitary people posing as independent scholars to write articles, brochures and books that bear a strong anti-communist content. There is strong evidence that some of the money being channeled to writers comes from the notorious Central Intelligence Agency.

But the US government's campaign to boost Marcos has not dampened protests directed at laying the blame for Aquino's murder on the doorstep of the regime. Several US-based organizations of Filipinos, including US newspapers like the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have called for the cancellation of Reagan's visit to the Philippines. To go ahead with the trip, they said would in effect condone not only Aquino's political execution but also the long track record of Marcos in human rights violations.

Said the *New York Times* in an editorial, "Given what is known today, it would be reckless for President Reagan to ignore the stain on the airport pavement by honoring Marcos with a visit. A 21-gun salute in November would provide a macabre echo of the gun of August."

PROTESTS... (continued from page 1)

At the Aquino home in Times St., Quezon City, grief and indignation were the common reaction of the people who came to view the body of the late senator. For three days, an estimated 50,000 people filed past Aquino's coffin as it lay in the sala of his home.

Through the collective feeling of mourning surged strong and definite anti-government undercurrents as most of the people believed that the regime was culpable for the slaying, if not the actual brains behind it. Said a manifesto, "*Kabit na bata alam kung sino ang pumatay kay Aquino.*"

A senior government clerk who came to pay his last respects to the fallen leader said, "The people have been afraid for so long. Now they are really angry... If a man of Aquino's stature can be killed, what more the little people. So even if we are afraid we have to demonstrate to his killers that we the people can only take so much." A small crowd that had gathered around him burst into applause.

The people's seething anger started to break out openly on Aug. 25. More than 500,000 people marched with the Aquino family as they transferred the body to the Sto. Domingo church at Quezon Blvd., Quezon City. A day before, a noise barrage was staged in Bacolod City, reminiscent of the protest action on April 6, 1978 to support opposition forces in the elections.

At the funeral procession in Quezon Blvd., grief assumed a clearcut political character as students led the crowd in shouting "Demokrasya, ipaglaban!" "Kalayaan, ipaglaban!" and "Mabuhay ang sambayanang Pilipino!" amid shouts of "Ni-noy, Ni-noy!" Yellow and black ribbons mingled with red streamers demanding "Justice for Ninoy and all victims of repression!" and "End tyranny! Unite and fight for democracy!"

High school students marched with their college counterparts, teachers, professionals, church people, workers, politicians and farmers, most of them from Aquino's home region of Central Luzon. The tell-tale signs of protest and civil disobedience were evident in the walkout of students and government rank-and-file employees from their schools and offices respectively despite an education ministry circular denying the suspension of classes.

Many government and private employees whose offices were along the route of the procession joined the marchers. "Okay lang na ma-undertime kami," they told their bosses. "Sobra na'yang si Marcos."

For the next two days, tens of thousands more trooped to visit Aquino's body at the church. Government officials who came to the church were coldly told to join the waiting lines. Prime Minister Cesar Virata who tried to get near the

NDF condemns slay

"Senator Aquino's assassination signals the death of all selflessness but vain efforts to achieve national reconciliation," said the NDF in a statement released on Aug. 22 condemning the killing.

"There can be no national reconciliation, under a military brutal regime," the NDF added. "There can only be unity of the people in the fight against the injustice and oppression perpetrated by it."

The NDF also said that when Aquino signed his intention to return to the Philippines, it had offered him the safety of its territories under the protection of the New People's Army.

"He (Aquino) did not die in vain," the NDF said. "The Filipino people will continue to struggle with the courage and determination worthy of all martyrs to their cause."

remains of the senator without lining up was stopped by marshals who told him that he had to line up like the rest. The embarrassed Virata slunked away.

The people's protests continued to gather strength in the following days. On Aug. 27 when the family of Aquino brought his body to their home province of Tarlac, an estimated 100,000 people greeted them at the Tarlac provincial capitol. Earlier, tens of thousands more had greeted the motorcade when it passed by different towns in Central Luzon. The people displayed placards and posters crying out "Ninoy, Patriot and Martyr" and "Freedom and the people's collective

will shall triumph."

Students, lawyers and human rights organizations held protest actions and issued manifestos condemning the assassination and linking it to the regime's long list of political crimes.

On Aug. 26, students from five schools in Manila boycotted their classes to protest the killing. The students were from the Technological Institute of the Philippines, Far Eastern University, Guzman Technology Institute, Manuel L. Quezon University and De Ocampo University.

On the same day, 5,000 students from the University of the Philippines launched a march and prayer-rally. The UP Student Council, which spearheaded the action, said that Aquino has joined the long list of the regime's victims like Macaling Dula, a Kalanga leader who was killed by soldiers because of his firm opposition to the regime's discriminatory policies on the ethnic minorities; Dr. Bobby de la Paz, who was gunned down by the military because he helped the poverty-stricken peasants of Samar; and Edgar Jopson, a former student leader who joined the revolutionary underground movement and was summarily executed by the military.

In a student leaders' forum on Aug. 28 which was attended by 21 schools, five big student groups and several student councils, the students stressed that Aquino's death is part of the general political repression and that there is a need to carry on the struggle even beyond the issue of Aquino's death. They called for unity in the fight to dismantle the US-Marcos dictatorship.

Martial law generation: Too young to know Ninoy but old enough to know the value of freedom



"There is a need for national reconciliation that is based on justice," the students said. "But there should be no deal with the dictator."

The Movement of Attorneys for Brotherhood, Integrity and Nationalism Inc. (MABINI) raised simple yet basic questions about the murder: "Who had the motive?" "Who had the opportunity?" "Who had the means?" to kill Aquino in the tightly guarded airport. MABINI called for general amnesty, an act which they described as "the first step to unity that could give meaning to Aquino's ultimate sacrifice."

From the different groups that participated in the protest actions, a loose coalition was formed. Called the JAJA or Justice for Aquino, Justice for All, the coalition said that "the killing of Aquino proves that the regime will stop at nothing in its attempts to crush the opposition and all individuals and groups fighting for freedom and social change."

In a statement, JAJA demanded the resignation of Marcos, the Batatan Pambansa members, the Cabinet and top generals of the military and the formation of a "responsible transition government composed of men of unquestionable integrity to pave the way for the realization of genuine democracy in the country." It also demanded a fair, open and speedy investigation of the assassination by a committee of retired justices, church leaders, prominent academicians and media people noted for their "impartiality, independence and civil libertarian principles."

JAJA lambasted US heightening interference in Philippine internal affairs

"Ninoy made supreme sacrifice for his people"

Jose Ma. Sison, founding chairman of the Kabatang Makabayan and political prisoner of six years, issued a letter to the family, relatives and friends of former Senator Aquino last Aug. 25. Liberator reprints here his statement in full.

My family-my wife, my children and I, share your grief over the death of Ninoy and wish to express to you our profound condolences.

The greatest consolation for you and for us is that Ninoy made the supreme sacrifice of his life for his people and his country. His memory will continue to haunt and damn those responsible for his assassination. But more importantly by his sacrifice, the people are inspired to carry on the struggle for freedom.

Since his arbitrary arrest at the inception of the fascist dictatorship in 1972, Ninoy has been a martyr to the cause of democracy in our country.

On the basis of our continuing experience, my wife and I know to some extent the torture and hardship that he went through for so many years in solitary confinement and under the threat of death.

The fascist dictatorship cannot wash its hands of responsibility for the coldblooded murder perpetrated obviously by a patsy while the victim was in the custody and under the supposed protection of its official agents.

The administration of US President Reagan cannot also wash its hands of responsibility for propping up a puppet regime of tyranny and colluding with it in persecuting Filipino political exiles.

As revealed by Ninoy himself in his recent taped interview with Radio Veritas, he had wanted to return to his country not only because of his sincere desire to participate in the struggle for democracy but also because his life was seriously in danger even in the United States. Apparently he believed that if he be killed, his death should be where the responsibility of the Marcos regime would be beyond doubt.

He was obviously caught in a pincer by the refusal of the Marcos regime to renew his passport as well as by the refusal of the Reagan Administration to give him the necessary accommodation and protection. Like other Filipino political exiles he suffered harassment from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and immigration authorities' restrictions on his freedom of movement and from his exposure to a possible Mafia contact.

The martyrdom of Ninoy is not in vain. The Filipino people are now more than ever determined to fight for national freedom and democracy.

The U.S.-Marcos regime continues to make threats and commit terrorist acts against the people. In the usual Marcos style, victims are blamed as culprits. By its unjust and tyrannical acts, this despotic regime is hastening its own doom.

Ninoy's example of patriotism and selflessness will live on in Philippine history and through the people.

as evidenced in the Reagan administration's endorsement of the government line on the assassination. It called for an immediate stop to US meddling as well as the lifting of all forms of control and censorship on the media coverage of the Aquino slaying in keeping with the people's right to know.

On their part, the legal opposition sharply reacted to the murder of one of their leading colleagues. To them, Aquino's killing was a clear sign of the regime's viciousness against his political enemies and its greed for power. As a result of Aquino's murder, more legal oppositionists have moved further away from reconciling with the ruling regime, dramatizing further the polarization of the political spectrum and the regime's total isolation.

Eva Estrada Kalaw, a former senator and presently vice-president of the UNIDO, an alliance of opposition political parties, said in a radio interview that she expects "things to escalate and the opposition polarized." Miamis Occidental governor Homobono Adaza said that he "prays that this dastardly crime has not crippled the parliamentary opposition

irretrievably and that, if there is more than one criminal, all will pay for their crime."

The Liberal Party, of which Aquino was the secretary-general, called on the nation "to heighten its resolve to remain stout in the fight for justice, democracy and freedom."

In a strongly-worded statement, former Senator Jose Diokno and currently head of the Movement for Philippine Sovereignty and Democracy (KAAKBAY), declared that the assassination proved "both the sheer incompetence of the present government and the folly of having destroyed democracy in our land."

Diokno demanded the resignation of the President and other top government officials as well as the heads of all services of the armed forces. He also called for resistance to all foreign interference in Philippine internal affairs.

At the same time, he cautioned the people on the near panic that shook Manila and other cities on Monday, saying that "to give way to (panic) would only play into the hands of those who would impose outright military rule in our country."

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Int'l opinion attacks FM

"The US provided the guns, Marcos pulled the trigger and killed Aquino!"

This was one of many slogans bannered by the streamers of demonstrators in the United States, Aquino's land of exile for three years, protesting the solon's assassination. On Aug. 23, about 50 Filipinos and Americans picketed the White House, demanding that Reagan cancel his visit to the Philippines and that the US government stop economic and military aid to the Marcos regime.

Waving placards calling Marcos a Filipino Hitler, the demonstrators marched for about 45 minutes in pouring rain. "Our protest is to condemn the assassination of Aquino and to lay the blame on the doorstep of the fascist Marcos government," said Teresa Rodriguez to a UPI interviewer. Rodriguez is the spokeswoman for the Coalition Against the Marcos Dictatorship and the Philippine Solidarity Network, the two groups which sponsored the demonstration and which number hundreds of members in 13 cities in the US and Canada.

In Los Angeles on Aug. 23, some 80 Filipinos and Americans demonstrated in front of the Philippine consulate. The group was headed by Danny Lamila of the Alliance Against the Marcos Dictatorship. A member of the Los Angeles Council, Alfred Snyder, hung a Philippine flag with a black ribbon in front of his house as a symbol of protest.

In other indications of protest, American newspapers ran editorials and articles on the killing, some of them criticizing the Marcos government for its "execution" of the senator and for its liability and failure to provide security for Aquino. US Senator Edward Kennedy delivered a eulogy during a memorial service for Aquino in midtown Manhattan, saying that "he (Aquino) returned as a peaceful soldier of freedom, so they gunned him down." He urged Reagan to cancel his visit to the Philippines.

The mayor of a city in California said

PROTESTS... (continued from page 5)

Definitely, by killing Aquino at a time of grave economic crisis and mass discontent, the regime has only set forth millions of people crying out and moving in protest against tyranny. A week after Aquino's murder, mass indignation and protests have continued in full spate. Notwithstanding the massive and intense reaction of the people thus far, what the regime may be seeing now is only the beginning of a bigger political upheaval.



Great grief and protest: Extended even beyond national boundaries

she is reconsidering her city's sister-city agreement with Manila because of the incident.

Meanwhile, on Aug. 27, the Philippine embassy in Washington was firebombed by unidentified persons, apparently in protest against the regime's hand in the slaying. No one was injured and damage to property was unestimated.

Other countries such as Australia, Spain, France, Thailand, Spain, Indonesia and Japan have also condemned Aquino's killing and called for an impartial investigation. Even conservative newspapers like the *Hindustan Times* in India have commented: "The world will not be fooled that Marcos and his over-acquisitive and over-ambitious wife Imelda had a hand in the killing."

In South Korea, another client regime of the US, some 30 people marched in front of the Philippine embassy in Seoul on Aug. 23 to protest the assassination and to pressure Reagan to cancel his visit to the Philippines. They asked the Seoul Korean government to demand that Marcos make a written statement taking full responsibility for the killing.

South Korean anti-government dissident Kim Das Jung said Aquino's

killing was a "tragic consequence of US support for the Marcos dictatorship." He predicted the assassination would lead to the fall of the Marcos government.

In Thailand, the Thai-language newspapers sharply criticized Marcos over the killing. The *Mait Chan* said in an editorial it could not believe Marcos' statement that the Philippine government had no hand in killing Aquino. The Kyodo news agency reported that "it is very unusual for Thai newspapers to show a harsh response to the top leaders of a partner country in the ASEAN."

In a welcome development, the president of the International Commission of Jurists, John Dowd, called for "an internationally supervised inquiry" into the slaying "in order that there can be no doubt in the eyes of the world concerning the investigation of the shooting." He said the inquiry should take place under the auspices of the United Nations or the ASEAN countries.

As the world reaction shows, the isolation of the regime has become complete in the international scene. People abroad know the identity of the perpetrators of the crime. As do the Filipino people.

CPP... (continued from page 2)

"But these schemes have always fallen flat by their own crudeness and transparency."

Aquino is only one in a long, bloody train of violence perpetrated by Marcos, a past master at political assassination and murder, the CPP said. This started with the murder of Julio Nalundasan, a politician who had beaten his father in an election, and picked up after he assumed the presidency in 1966. On Aug. 21, 1971, he ordered the bombing of a big rally of the Liberal Party at Plaza Miranda in which nine people were killed and hundreds seriously wounded, including almost all of the LP national leaders. A year after, he ordered count-

less bombings in Metro Manila as an excuse to impose martial law.

Under martial law, Marcos executed his policy of summary executions, now better known as "salvaging." In a way, said the CPP, "Aquino may be said to be the latest victim of the regime's salvaging."

The CPP extended its sympathy and condolences to Aquino's family. The party acknowledged that although it had differences with Aquino over how to bring about the regime's downfall, "our objectives - to end the hated regime - ran parallel to each other. In many ways, his efforts and ours complemented one another as we fought a common enemy of the Filipino people."

Witnesses accuse soldiers

"You know, they have a death sentence waiting for me. That's the assassination I'm worried about," said Ninoy Aquino in an interview with *Newsweek*. On the day he returned to Manila, to protect himself, he put on a bullet-proof vest just before the plane landed. "I'm protected here," Aquino told his brother-in-law Ken Kashiwahara, pointing to his body. "But if they hit me on the head, I'm a goner."

Aquino's words turned out to be prophetic. He was fatally shot in the back of the head at close range, immediately after he stepped off the plane. Marcos denied government responsibility in the murder, blaming it as the handiwork of the "subversives," ever the convenient scapegoat of the regime.

The accounts of eyewitnesses, including foreign and local journalists and photographers, however indicate otherwise. Kiyoshi Wakamiya, a Japanese freelance journalist who was aboard the China Airlines plane which carried Aquino from Taipei to Manila, said the ex-senator was shot by Philippine military officers.

Upon his return from Manila, Wakamiya told an airport press conference that Aquino's killing was an "organized and premeditated murder by Philippine authorities." He said that soon after the plane arrived at the airport, three Philippine military officers took Aquino off the plane. Two of the soldiers sandwiched Aquino and another followed behind as they descended the ramp, Wakamiya said.

Moments later, Wakamiya said two of the three men took out handguns, believed to be .45 pistols and then came the sound of "bang" two or three times. "I saw the two shoot Aquino in the head from a one-meter range," he reported. Aquino then fell to the ground and a great deal of blood gushed out.

Then a man stepped down from the rear of a gray-colored military van with the sign "AVSECOM" which was parked nearby, as if he were being pushed out by somebody. Wakamiya said the military men fired guns at the man. Immediately after that, Philippine soldiers who had apparently been concealed around the plane opened fire, throwing the people inside the plane into a panic.

Wakamiya said in his report which was picked up by the Kyodo and UPI news agencies that he witnessed the scene by peering through the legs of TV cameramen and government officers who were huddled at the plane exit.

The account of an unidentified journalist who flew on the same flight with Aquino also belied the government

version of the killing. He said that after Aquino had been escorted out of the plane by three khaki-uniformed men, he heard the "sound of several dry gun bullets reverberate outside the plane." He looked through the window and saw the opposition leader falling face down with blood gushing out of his head.

The next moment, a man in a blue shirt came into view from the side of a large-size dark military vehicle that had been parked on the plane's side. "Men in dark blue uniforms fired rifle shots at the man's abdomen. They pumped several more shots as if they were giving him a coup de grace as he lay face up," he said. "The man appeared to have already been killed."

"Subsequently, several men in dark blue uniforms surrounded the two bodies. They stood toward the airport terminal and China Airlines passenger windows with their rifles ready. Several shots were fired for unknown reasons," he revealed.

The journalist said that when he peeked outside again, "I saw the soldiers carry the body of Aquino into the rear section of the military vehicle, leaving behind the body of the other man." He said there were only five minutes between the start of the shooting and the time Aquino's body was removed.

The autopsy report on Aquino raised more questions. The report established that the trajectory of the single bullet allegedly fired from a .357 magnum

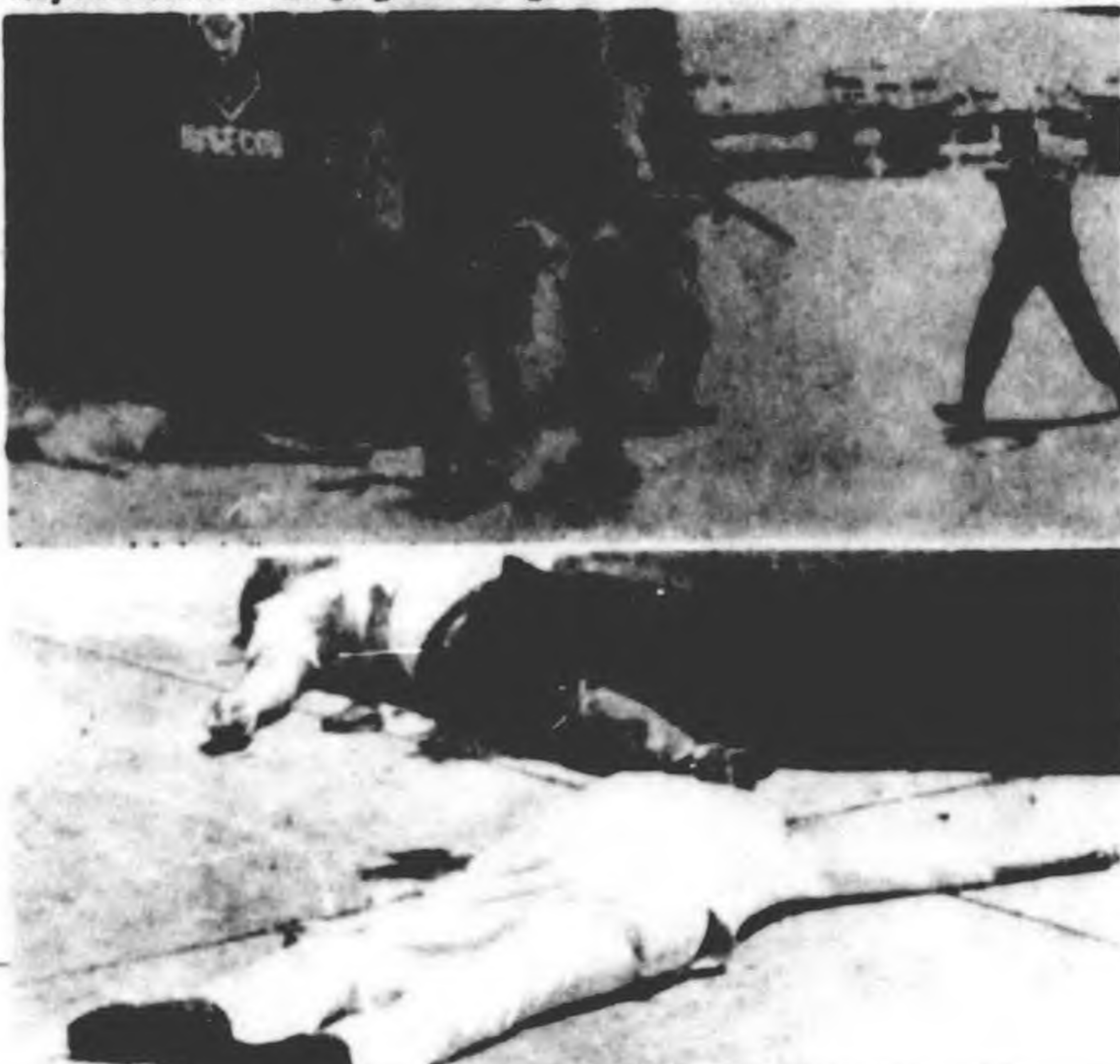
entered through the nape near the left ear and exited through the center of the chin. This could mean that Aquino was shot from an elevated position by the killer, apparently while standing on the staircase. The alleged assassin stands 5'4 (although this was later changed to 5'7) by General Olivas, and Aquino stands at 5'10.

The mother of Aquino, Aurora Aquino, was not allowed to accompany the senator's body to the Army Station Hospital in Fort Bonifacio. She insisted on seeing her slain son but AVSECOM men refused to allow her on the murder scene. At Fort Bonifacio, some 40 Army Scout Rangers and jungle fighters were positioned at the entrance gate when the body arrived. Observers said it seemed that they were prepared to meet the senator's body and to prohibit other persons and journalists from entering the camp.

Media people said film negatives of the incident were "borrowed" or confiscated by Malacanang from photographers who were able to take shots at least of the soldiers who did not stop firing at the alleged assassin until he was dead. In one newspaper, Imelda herself called up to "advise" the editors not to print the photo of the actual shooting. Several days after, Malacanang "advised" editors not to print photos of the mourners, of the body and of demonstrations staged abroad protesting the murder.

But with so many unanswered questions, so many dubious accounts on the Aquino slaying, the people will not rest until they get to the bottom of this heinous crime.

Airport execution: Carrying out the regime's death sentence



EDITORIAL

Only unity and struggle against tyranny will vindicate the death of our martyrs

So many courageous and freedom-loving Filipinos have been butchered by the Marcos regime. It does not now hide its blood-stained hands from the killing of political prisoners. Much less does it hide its hand in the recent assassination of Benigno Aquino Jr. a public figure who stood up against the ruling fascist

This infamous regime has perpetrated mass kidnappings, arson, bombings and other mass atrocities that dwarf the crimes of any other war regime combined. It has also carried out summary executions.

Time and again, the regime has provoked protests over these executions, but it has never or the all too familiar eye-wash of a public inquiry then should one believe now its innocence over the matter of Aquino's murder?

There can be no doubt that the regime is the chief mastermind behind this heinous crime and not have acted with such impunity without the vocal and consistent support of the United States, by its immense economic assistance to the dictatorship and by its whole-hearted support of the terrorist Marcos regime, including the regime's terrorist acts against the people. Even the US State Department is helping to whitewash the Aquino assassination by promoting the Philippine government's official version of events, thereby absolving itself of any direct responsibility.

Aquino was a determined anti-Marco dictatorship stance, his political acumen and his strong influence among the legal opposition groups and political reformists, he could very well have mustered the splintered opposition forces and consolidated them into a united front against the Marcos regime would find increasingly difficult to deal with.

As far as the domestic political scene is concerned, Aquino stood as a major threat to Marcos and his possible hand-picked successor. Killing him physically eliminated a potent outside threat and immediately secured the power monopoly held by the Marcos clique.

Against the backdrop of the grave economic crisis besetting the regime and the dramatically surging revolutionary movement in the country, Aquino's commitment to work for the strengthening of the anti-dictatorship opposition forces at home became an immediate and big problem for the Marcos clique.

The nation's economy that has deteriorated more in recent years has fueled anger and spontaneous protests against the regime. A mammoth balance of payments deficit, sluggish

economic growth, high inflation rate and serious unemployment have become the nagging issues raised against the continuing rule of the US-Marcos regime itself.

The puppet dictatorship is isolated from the people and has come under intensifying attacks from various forces. The armed struggle led by the New People's Army has dramatically mounted in the last two years. The Bangsa Moro Army has persisted in waging guerilla warfare in their areas in the southern Philippines. The open mass movement, participated in by a growing number of democratic sectors, has spread nationwide. People's organizations have sharpened their attacks against the regime, deliberately and widely calling for its total dismantling. Furthermore, the traditional and legal opposition has drifted further towards the militant and pro-people path, flatly rejecting cooptation offers of the regime.

Moreover, the merging currents of the mounting armed struggle, the advancing open mass movement and a unified front, strongly carrying an anti-autocracy and anti-fascism, are developing that do not augur well for the present dictatorship. Out of these accelerating developments, Aquino may have inevitably risen to the occasion and strongly figured in the overthrow of the dictatorship movement, militant and uncompromising, and thus could have very effectively threatened the rule of Marcos or his hand-picked replacement.

In slaying Aquino, the Marcos clique served notice that it knows no bounds when the reins of state power are at stake. Despite the regime's much-ballyhooed '84 and '87 elections, the showcases of the regime's "normalization" process, sheer violence and brute suppression are still the main weapons wielded to rule over the people. Furthermore, it proved too that no voluntary and significant power-sharing by the Marcos clique with the legal opposition, much less, with the broad masses of the people, will likely occur in the immediate future.

As long as the regime reigns supreme, there can be no end to political terrorism and repression in our country. The only recourse left is for the people to forcibly overthrow this criminal regime and put in its stead a truly democratic coalition government that, among others, will guarantee basic individual and social freedoms.

Along this objective, the Filipino people must strengthen the phalanx against the dictatorship—a broad unity of workers, peasants, students, teachers, professionals, churchpeople, businessmen and all democratic personalities, groups and forces. All forms of struggle, both armed and non-armed, that can hasten the downfall of the US-Marcos dictatorship must be utilized and intensified on the basis of sound and solid preparations; every major component of the resistance movement must be coordinated.

Let Benigno Aquino's example of courage, determination and self-sacrifice inspire every Filipino to contribute his share to the decisive overthrow of the dictatorship. Let his important contribution to the struggle against the regime, along with the contributions of other martyrs, be enshrined in the hearts of all those struggling for national freedom and democracy.