Histo166: Martial Law

**\* Video of Marcos declaring Martial Law \***

**\* Snippets of scenes leading up to the title of documentary \***

**“TITLE”**

**\* Scene of narrator in the distance approaching cam\***

Martial law remains to be one of the most notable historical events in recent Philippine history. From the abuse of power on the part of the military to the rise of the people during the EDSA Revolution, we are talking about a time of political transition and nation-definition.

But amidst the cacophony of criticisms and harsh reactions towards this period of corrupt dictatorship, some would argue that there was development; there was progress.

We are here to see things from the perspective of those who lived through the struggle and hardships associated with the Marcos regime - to get a feel as to how it was like to be one of the many living under martial law.

Was it really that bad? What was it like? What or how can we, today, learn from those experiences?

**INTRODUCTION**

*Marcos came into power in 1965 sharing his plans for development. He won the presidential election as a member of the Nacionalista party although he was formerly the president of the opposing Liberal party.*

*As president, Marcos placed heavy efforts in consolidating the military, bureaucratic and elite political support with the agenda of centralizing power in his favor. As a result, the military was able to participate in economic activities that directly benefited both the president and his cronies.*

*In 1969, he was reelected for another term as president but this came with a lot of controversy, as there were allegations of vote buying and fraud amidst public violence and civil unrest. Three years after, Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law, claiming that this had to be done in order to improve the economic condition of the nation and to quell insurgencies on the part of the Communists, which reorganized under the new name, the New People’s army.*

**BODY**

**It was in the early 1970’s that the world’s raw material prices generally increased. This helped bolster the performance of the Philippine economy with a real GNP of almost 7% per year in the five years that followed Marcos’s declaration of martial law. In the five years preceding the declaration, the Philippines was experiencing roughly 5% annually.**

**Moreover, in the 1970’s, the public sector was a crucial player in national economy with the massive expenditure on the part of the government, which resulted in an increase of 40% in the GNP of the succeeding decade following 1972. The government resorted to international debt, borrowing from western counterparts, in order to fund its projects. Hence, the Marcos era was also known to be “debt driven”.**

**The Philippines had an external debt of up to $17.2 billion in 1980. It was one of the top 100 recipients of loans from the World Bank.**

**To make things worse for the regime, there was a series of internal problems that led to catastrophic economic conditions for the Philippines. This was due to increasing visible mismanagement on the part of crony enterprises. For instance, it was in January 1981 that a financial scandal involving a businessman with debts of up to P700m fled the country requiring large amounts of loans from the Central Bank of the Philippines and other government-owned financial institutions to some eighty firms.**

**As a response to the declining economic, there was a shift in economic policy in 1980. This resulted in a dramatic increase of imports, which subsequently led to an increase in debt-service payments and emergency loans.**

**The Philippines experienced increasing inequality between the rich and the poor.**

**CONCLUSION**

*Prior to the declaration of Martial Law by President Ferdinand Marcos in September 21, 1972, there has been a series of lawlessness and disorder plaguing the streets of Manila. But that should not overshadow the large efforts in infrastructural development pushed by the president.*

*But this quickly came to an end. There was an increase of unemployment, rallies, political unrest and instability that followed the declaration of martial law. Though there were government efforts to boost culture and tourism, the corruption and civil unrest made it difficult for the nation to pick up from the declining economic condition of the Philippines.*

*Despite the cruel aberrations of the Marcos regime, which included numerous cases of human rights violations in addition to the abuse of power and corruption that plagued the Philippines during martial law, there seems to be a divide in perspective towards what has been done and what has been achieved. On the one hand, pro-Marcos groups would argue that these were good times where the Philippines was, for the first time ever, able to taste substantial economic growth and progress. On the other, the crimes and cruelties committed were unforgivable – those were dark days that have brought the Philippines down instead of forward.*

*From the interviews we have gathered, although the wrongdoings of the regime cannot be justified, from the perspective of ordinary citizens, the days of martial law were not all dark and grim.* **As long as one abided by the rules and regulations of the time, such as the curfews, avoiding any badmouthing towards the regime and other rigorous policies, there would be little to fear.**

But what we cannot turn a blind eye to is the reality that the dictatorship brought about serious repercussions in terms of the country’s economy and the rights of its people. As we move on as a nation, we must remember the era of Martial Law as a testament of the discipline and unity that the Filipino people are capable of.