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Headline: 2 sides of Marcos burial issue

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The Supreme Court issues today its ruling on the question of whether the remains of former president and dictator Ferdinand Marcos deserve burial in the Libingan ng mga Bayani, the resting place of heroes.

There are those who say the justices have already decided on the issue, and that the administration has pulled the right strings so that President Duterte could repay his debt of gratitude to the Marcos family, specifically for contributing to his election campaign.

Others hold on to a thread of hope: They mounted on Sunday a protest concert billed “Pray for Eight” (a reference to the need for at least eight justices to vote against the Marcos burial), which gained political status with the attendance of former president Noynoy Aquino and the candidate he supported, Mar Roxas.

Though it is everyone’s right to attend a public gathering, the presence of the two men at the concert held at the Luneta lent it a partisan tinge. Even this paper’s cartoon mascot was moved to comment, “Buhay pa rin ang mga dilawan!” or “The yellow forces are still alive!” Well, gasping for air and holding on to the final vestiges of organization might—but alive nonetheless.

So the ruling to be handed down today by the high court will be read through the lens of the partisan and the political, and parsed by symbolists for “deeper” meanings beyond the immediate and practical.

But a commentary in Monday’s opinion pages illustrates the broader implications of exactly what interment in the Libingan means, to both the survivors of the deceased and the wider community and next generations for whom the cemetery of heroes is supposed to serve as a lesson in history and heroism.

I’m referring to Eduardo Tadem’s commentary on the burial last July 26 of Bartolome “Bart” Pasion, who served as a private in the Armed Forces, but who devoted much of his long life to the struggle for peasant rights.

As the title of the piece puts it, in Pasion we have “A Huk vet in the Libingan ng mga Bayani.”

This is certainly ironic since hundreds of soldiers and policemen lost their lives fighting the Huks, as the members of the Hukbo ng Bayan Laban sa Hapon (People’s Army against the Japanese) were called. Anyway, what is a hero? Is he or she necessarily a former high official or dignitary? Does one have to be a former soldier who fought in behalf of his or her country? What does the offer from the military to have Pasion buried in the Libingan mean to the debate over Marcos’ resting place?

I guess you can argue it both ways. Marcos partisans may argue that if a former Huk, who devoted his life battling the establishment for the rights of his fellow peasants, deserves burial in the Libingan, then so does a former president who also (claimed to have) fought the Japanese.

On the other hand, you could say that if the Libingan is reserved for genuine heroes, for men and women who devoted their lives in service of their country and for ideals, does a corrupt and venal ex-president deserve a place among them?

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which President Duterte once denigrated as biased in favor of richer countries that are responsible for much of the effects of climate change, came into force last Nov. 4.

Sen. Loren Legarda, the “UN Global Champion for Resilience,” said she welcomes the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and is calling on concerned agencies, particularly the Climate Change Commission and the Department of Foreign Affairs, to work for the ratification at the local level.

Ratification, she said in a statement, would enable the country to “gain access to funds that will help the country adapt to climate change impacts.” Indeed, if, as environmentalists claim, the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, all the more we should stand behind the Paris Agreement.

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Of the more than 30 government bodies involved in assessing and implementing the Paris accord, 10 agencies have so far submitted their certificates of concurrence. Once these certificates are complete, the DFA will then endorse these to Malacañang for certification.