

Title:

Ferdinand Marcos - President of the Philippines, 1917-1989

Word Count:

287

Summary:

A trained lawyer, Marcos was convicted of assassinating a political opponent of his father in 1939 and, from his condemned cell, argued his case up to the Philippine Supreme Court, where he won an acquittal.

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Article Body:

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During the Second World War, Marcos collaborated with the Japanese who occupied the Philippines - though he later claimed to have led the Filipino resistance, a fiction in which the United States colluded, awarding him medals. He emerged from the war a wealthy man and served in the Philippine House of Representatives and the senate, switching parties when it suited him.

Elected president in 1965, he won a second term in 1969. But in 1972, he declared martial law, imprisoned his political opponents, dissolved congress, suspended habeas corpus and used the army as his private police force. He then wrote a new constitution giving himself considerably more power. His wife, Imelda, and other family members were given lucrative government posts. While the Filipino people lived in abject poverty, the Marcos flaunted their extravagant lifestyle, Imelda becoming world-renowned for her huge collection of shoes. (While the acquisition of shoes may no doubt be a laudable enterprise, especially from a shoe manufacturer's point of view, it is perhaps questionable whether it merits keeping an entire population in misery.)

In 1981, Marcos ended martial law, but continued to rule by decree. Opposition leader Benigno Aquino, who had gone into exile after being imprisoned for eight years by Marcos, returned in 1983, but was shot dead on the orders of Imelda in front of a plane full of journalists after he had landed at Manila. This sparked riots. An official enquiry blamed a high ranking general Fabian Ver. A family friend of Marcoses, Ver was acquitted when the case went to court.

