



Language

The resistance in the Philippines in 1986 popularised the term 'people power'. The Marcos regime ruled by martial law from 1972 to 1981, and subsequently remained highly authoritarian and also corrupt. It faced significant popular challenge in the 1980s. (There were also longer term campaigns of guerrilla resistance by an Islamic and a communist movement.) In the mid-1980s leftist political forces, including the Communist Party, loosely allied themselves in unarmed protest with other social and political groups, so that by 1986 a broad sector of the population was involved, from poor farmers, workers and shanty town dwellers to students, professionals and businessmen. Women were especially active in opposing Marcos.

The assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino in 1983 evoked outrage, and the fraudulent parliamentary elections of 1984 prompted mass demonstrations of protest. When presidential elections were called in February 1986, Cory Aquino (Benigno's widow) stood against Marcos. The regime's rigging of the election to deny her victory led to a nonviolent uprising – Aquino called for mass civil disobedience and a general strike, and Marcos was persuaded to step down after a mass popular demonstration which defied the regime's tanks. The role of the armed forces – the Defence Minister Juan Enrile led a military breakaway and then appealed to the army and people to support Aquino – has been much debated. The Catholic Church played a central role in the evolving protests, and in backing Aquino for the presidency. When Marcos called on units of the army to attack Enrile's headquarters, Cardinal Sin broadcast an appeal for popular intervention, and nuns and priests were at the forefront of the thousands who prevented the troops advancing.

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