

Marcos dies in exile at 72; Aquino won't allow burial

HONOLULU (CNS) — Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the Philippines for 20 years before being ousted in 1986, died in exile at St. Francis Medical Center in Honolulu Sept. 28. He was 72.

The former Philippine president was hospitalized Jan. 15 and had been critically ill for several months. Cardinal Ricardo Vidal of Cebu, Philippines, administered the last rites in February.

Marcos had lapsed into a full coma, and surgeons had implanted a pacemaker Sept. 27 in an effort to save his life.

Marcos — accused of accumulating millions of dollars during his presidency through the embezzlement of Philippine funds, theft, bribes and kickbacks — died without standing trial on the charges. Prosecution had been delayed by his illnesses.

Family spokesman Roger Peyuan said the family was still discussing where to bury the body. Philippine President Corazon Aquino reiterated her policy that Marcos' body could not be returned to the Philippines. Marcos' wife, Imelda, said she would not allow her husband to be buried in the United States, their home in exile since 1986.

Mrs. Marcos had compared the family's exile to Christ's suffering on the cross and said it was a "divine will and right to live and die in one's country."

In February, she reiterated to Cardinal Vidal the family's desire to return home.

After the visit, Cardinal Vidal said he gave Marcos Communion and administered the last rites, but did not hear his confession because the former president could hardly speak.

The Diocese of Honolulu stopped private home Masses for the Marcoses in June 1986, four months after they arrived in Hawaii. Father Clarence M. Liu, episcopal vicar of the diocese, said the diocese could not "provide special services for one party."

During his years as president, Marcos faced constant criticism by Philippine bishops and international human-rights groups.

In 1983, Marcos accused Catholic schools in his country of teaching anti-government hatred. "The teachers and even nuns and priests in the Catholic schools are teaching the children hatred: hatred against Marcos, hatred against the government," he said.

Cardinal Jaime Sin of Manila, one of Marcos's most outspoken critics, denied the charges and said that "maybe the president was tired."

Marcos — an expert marksman who was highly decorated during World War II — was first elected president in 1965 after 10 years as a member of the House of Representatives and seven as a senator. He was re-elected to a second four-year term as president in 1969. Under the constitution at the time, a president could not serve more than two terms.

In September 1972, a year before his second term would have expired, Marcos declared martial law, saying the country was threatened by subversion and rebellion.

The constitution introduced during martial law provided for a six-year presidency and put no limits on re-election.



AP Wide World Photo

Supporters of Ferdinand Marcos display a portrait of him and his wife, Imelda, Friday, Sept. 29, to commemorate the fallen leader's death.

During that period, many church leaders — including Cardinal Sin — criticized the government's human-rights records. Church newspapers were among those censored or closed by the government. Several priests, religious and lay people involved in social-action projects were arrested and held for long periods of time without formal charges or trials.

Marcos declared an end to martial law Jan. 17, 1981, shortly before Pope John Paul II visited the country.

When the pope visited, he, too, criticized Marcos' human-rights record. "One can never justify any violation of

the fundamental dignity of the human person or the basic rights that safeguard that dignity," the pope said during a meeting with Marcos.

However, the pope also praised Marcos for lifting martial law and for planning to hold a presidential election that June.

Opposition groups organized a boycott of the election, but Marcos told voters in the predominantly Catholic Philippines that it was a mortal sin for citizens not to vote.

After Cardinal Sin issued a pastoral letter saying the people should follow their consciences about whether or not to vote, a

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