

Review of *The Marcos Dynasty*
by Sterling Seagrave
(New York: Harper and Row, 1988)

by
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This book was written by a well-known journalist for a general audience but academic circles will find in it a wealth of documentation and insights that will be useful for continuing research on the Philippines under Marcos. For purposes of background, Seagrave repeats accounts that are already well-known, but other stories he introduces about the Marcoses are startling and not as widely known previously. These include Marcos's intimate links with the White House, the Pentagon, the CIA, the Yakuza, the gold pools of London, Zurich, New York and Tokyo, Australian right-wing personalities, and other international networks that were involved in the systematic plunder of the Philippines during the twenty years that Marcos was in power. In the words of the author, the truth about Marcos is all the more interesting for what it reveals about others. It would not have been possible to undertake the "plunder of the ages" without the support, or at least the knowledge, of various international institutions which helped sustain Marcos in power.

The Chapters about the "black gold" and "cloak and dagger" operations of Marcos are the most fascinating and intriguing, if only because they read like fiction. But Seagrave has meticulously documented the ways in which Marcos accumulated and disposed of his gold over the years in a manner that makes these heretofore improbable gold stories credible. It is easy to dismiss some of the accounts as hearsay, but Seagrave has presented evidence and thoughtful analyses of Marcos' shady international activities that are hard to dispute.

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The book can be faulted instead with inaccurate documentation on the Philippine side. For instance, Sergio Osmeña is mentioned as House speaker of the Philippine legislature in 1933 (p. 36). He was instead Senate Majority Floor Leader. His term as Speaker of the House ended in 1922 when he was elected to the Senate. And on page 37, Osmeña did not join Roxas to start off the Liberal Party. It was only Roxas who broke off from Nacionalista party to form the Liberal Party in 1946. Roxas subsequently ran against Osmeña, who remained Nacionalista, in the presidential election that year.

Ilocanos are portrayed by Seagrave as being known to carry "butterfly knives." (p.17) This observation applies to Batanguenos, not Ilocanos. Then President Quirino and his wife Alicia could not have entertained Chiang Kai Shek in July 1949 (p.129) because Quirino had been a widower even before he became Vice President. And his wife died during World War II.

Another account that could be questioned is whether the opposition to Marcos was warned about the impending declaration of martial law in 1972. It was true that major opposition leaders speculated about Marcos' plan to perpetuate himself in power through martial law. But it is highly doubtful that "a messenger from Malacanang went to each one of them on September 18." (p. 244) In the case of Senator Manglapus, his "sudden departure" to the U.S. on September 21, 1972 was not because he knew martial law was coming. His lecture tour had been planned months in advance, and in fact he wanted to return to Manila when he learned Marcos had pulled his power grab. The Marcos' soldiers raided Manglapus' house to arrest him, indicating that martial law regime was not aware he had left the country.

Also, Marcos was not the principal attorney of Colonel Napoleon Valeriano in the latter's celebrated court martial trial. Valeriano had a military and a civilian lawyer for his defense. Marcos was on the scene exploiting it for political purposes. He was there for the publicity and not the defense of Valeriano.

There are other factual errors such as Eduardo Cojuangco's acquiring "a seat in the Marcos rubber-stamp Congress," (p. 287). It was Cojuangco's sister, Mercedes Cojuangco Teodoro who was elected to the Marcos Congress (Batasan).

Still on the Cojuangcos, Seagrave makes one more error. The Philippine Long Distance Company did not belong to the whole Cojuangco clan, but only to one side of it. There were three distinct factions in the Cojuangco clan.

Marcos teamed up with Ramon Cojuangco to take the company away from the Jose Cojuangco faction. It was much more complex than the Seagrave account.

Regarding the late Senator Jose Diokno, he was too young to have run for the Senate in 1946 (p. 125). That was his father Ramon Diokno.

There are other errors like *Jim Cruz* (p.278) should be *Jun Cruz*; General Ver's son *Rexan* (p.391) should be *Rexor*; Reform the Army Movement for RAM (p.394) should be Reform the Armed Forces Movement.

There are mistakes in regard to Hawaii history as well. Sanford Dole was not Dole Pineapple.(p.30) Dole Pineapple was named after James Dole, founder of Hawaii Pineapple Co., the predecessor of Dole Pineapple. Then the leader of the coup against Queen Liliuokalani was Lorrin Thurston, not Sanford Dole.

On the whole, the book is most instructive in deepening our understanding of Marcos's sinister personality and the criminal nature of his regime. It could have been tightened up a bit by analyzing more thoroughly why the regime fell, particularly the collapse of the Philippine economy, which had been drained by Marcos and his cronies. As is often the case, the political demise of authoritarian regimes is usually preceded by economic disaster.