

Talibang Anakpawis

Suplemento

“Ipagtanggol ang inaapi; labanan ang umaapi”

24 Pebrero 2026

ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT

WHAT THE *HELL* HAPPENED? HOW TO GO FORWARD?

Forty years after the EDSA Popular Uprising that overthrew the brutal, corrupt US-backed dictatorship of Ferdinand E. Marcos Sr., the Philippines is at another crossroads. The late dictator’s son President Bongbong Marcos, chief lackey of the imperialists, is prepared to stop the commemoration by the socialist left and workers movement from taking place at EDSA Shrine.

Despite applications for assembly permits by various groups, the police declared EDSA Shrine a no rally zone. In the days leading up to the anniversary, the government charged around 100 leftist leaders and anti-corruption protesters with sedition and deployed over 13,000-armed police in the National Capital Region to suppress demonstrations. We say: *Drop the charges against Renato Reyes, Tiffany Brillante, Jacob Baluyot, Joaquin Buenaflor and all anti-corruption protesters!*

The EDSA40 coalition, composed of the left and workers movement, is determined to defy bans and march to EDSA Shrine. In contrast, the organizers of the rival Trillion Peso March Movement (TPMM) at EDSA People Power Monument have agreed to an attendance cap of 20,000 people for the government-approved assembly and announced a ban on calls for the resignation of Bongbong Marcos.

Until recently, the fate of Marcos was uncertain due to anti-corruption rallies, coup threats, even calls for a new EDSA-type uprising that shook the US neo-colony. These movements had the potential to polarize the situation and challenge the Marcos/Duterte oligarchy, whose power structure is rooted in privatization and denationalization policies imposed by the World Bank-IMF and the US after the defeat of the revolutionary upsurge following the 1986 EDSA Popular Uprising. However, with renewed US support, Marcos has stabilized his position and tightened his grip on power.

So what led to the failure of the anti-corruption struggle?

The surge in protests was primarily driven by uni-

versity and senior high school students angered by increasing fees, budget cuts, and diminishing career opportunities due to Donald Trump’s new policies toward neo-colonies like the Philippines. These student-led actions began to mobilize broader segments of the working class and the oppressed, as seen in the massive September 21 protests on the anniversary of the declaration of martial law, which attracted over 100,000 participants in Manila alone.

The Luneta protest united the far left, particularly the National Democrats of BAYAN and the Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM), with students, workers, flood victims, and urban poor who sought to remove Marcos and Duterte from power. The critical issue remained: *What would be the road forward?* What was missing was a people’s alternative to the rule of the corrupt oligarchs.

The participation of significant numbers of working-class and plebeian youth made the September 21 protests a target for police harassment and repression. When they resisted, the protesters were quickly abandoned by the leaders of both the liberal bourgeois and right-wing Dutertista opposition. The lack of organized solidarity from much of the Philippine left for those victimized by police violence further demoralized the masses.

At EDSA, the Church-aligned liberal Trillion Peso March Movement (TPMM), wanted to shield Marcos from demands for his removal and to neutralize Vice President Sara Duterte and her right-wing populist supporters, who the pro-American “opposition” seeks to frame as being disloyal to the US drive to strangle China. A section of the National Democrats, specifically the Makabayan bloc in Congress led by Antonio Tinio, balanced between the Luneta protesters and the TPMM-aligned liberals, distancing themselves from any suggestion of supporting Marcos’s ouster.

By mid-November, BAYAN and PLM leaders finally demanded the resignation of the Marcos/

Duterte oligarchs and proposed the creation of a “National Transitional Council/People’s Transitional Council” due to the pressure from the mammoth anti-corruption rally by the conservative Iglesia Ni Cristo and the heat from their own youth and urban poor base. Our tendency, recognizing the social weight and the authority of these leftist groups among the advanced sections of the proletariat, challenged BAYAN and PLM to lead a genuine struggle for a Government of the Masses.

The call for a People’s Transitional Council initially inspired the most militant BAYAN and PLM supporters, who hoped it would unite the most committed fighters and propel the struggle for power to achieve national and social liberation. While the Spartacists supported the call for a Council, we sharply opposed including liberals because these so-called “allies” are against ousting Marcos.

BAYAN and PLM leaderships shifted rightward, betraying the aspirations of their members and supporters by proposing Councils that included Church officials, the military, and “reform-minded business leaders”. *This is a betrayal!* It was impossible to form a People’s Transitional Council with these forces because they were all in Marcos’s camp.

The strategy pursued by BAYAN and PLM in the anti-corruption movement mirrors past failures by tying the left and workers movement to pro-US liberals and capitalist oligarchs. This played out after the 1986 EDSA Popular Uprising, when the Marxist left supported the US-approved “Revolutionary Government” of *hacendera* Corazon Aquino. The leadership of the Marxist left thus restrained the insurgent masses from pushing for power during the turbulent period that followed.

In the run up to Bonifacio Day we deployed our tiny Spartacist forces across Metro Manila to intersect leftist youth, socialists and trade union militants. Our goal was to expose the new sell-out and motivate a fight for a socialist, working-class alternative for people’s liberation. We tried at every opportunity to promote a united front show of force in Luneta and communicated our opposition to the entry of the liberals and the generals in the proposed Transitional Council. The political reason behind the inability of BAYAN, PLM, and labor leaders to mobilize support for Bonifacio Day was that they offered no serious alternative to the oligarchs. They called for a Transitional Council but were paralyzed in fighting for it, because the “allies” these leaders wanted were opposed to ousting Marcos to defend their own interests. The result of hopping in the same boat with the liberals and generals was to lead the movement to a dead end, allowing President Marcos to regain his footing.

Presently, the Catholic Church hierarchy is going great lengths to influence leaders of the workers movement, including PLM and the National Democrats, through the Labor Consultative Assembly convened by the Church agency CARITAS. We also find the “socialist” leaders of PLM flirting with business circles to form an “anti-dynasty” alliance with the likes of Management Association of the Philip-

pinas (MAP) and Makati Business Club (MBC), the premier representatives of the oligarch and imperialist interests in the country, and the Advocates for National Interest representing retired senior military brass. This strategy is nothing but a rerun of the EDSA “People Power” model, which the country has experienced thrice in the past and each time led to more neocolonial slavery. Why? Because the oligarchs and their generals are pillars of social order in this country where they are the compradors, enforcers and labor contractors for the US Empire, which in turn gives military and economic aid to the corrupt government.

Today, as during 1986-1987, left and workers movement leaders continue to block the masses from acting independently against pro-US liberals, with figures like Teddy Casiño, and Luke Espiritu acting to moderate and redirect mass militancy into channels acceptable to the ruling class. This continued association between the left and the pillars of the bourgeois establishment only discredits the left in the eyes of the broad masses, who are fed up with the imperialist extortion overseen by Marcos and his liberal bloc partners.

It is urgent that the militant youth and socialist left of BAYAN and PLM take action to stop the cycle of sell-outs and defeats. What is absent today and during the EDSA Popular Uprising in February 1986 is an anti-imperialist, socialist and working-class oriented pole that seeks to mobilize the masses and other oppressed against the US-backed Marcos regime and all factions of the corrupt Philippine oligarchy.

Without revolutionary leadership, tomorrow will bring catastrophe. To build a strong opposition to Marcos and the oligarchs first requires that a sharp political fight take place inside the National Democrats and Partido Lakas ng Masa, with the aim of sweeping out the pro-liberal elements and compromisers, and rejecting, once and for all, the EDSA “People Power” strategy which falsely suggests that a coalition with bourgeois forces will resolve the burning questions of the day.

A socialist, proletarian-oriented leadership is needed to win! We call on all socialists to support the fight to build it. *Simulan natin.*

—Spartacist Group Pilipinas
24 February 2026



PHILIPPINES:
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councils without
liberals & generals!

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