

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

# Ninoy Aquino, the hero of our...

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that he was the number one choice of Filipinos. However, Marcos secured his position by declaring Martial Law on September 21, 1972. He had Ninoy arrested on charges of murder, illegal possession of firearms and subversion. Ninoy was also accused of being involved in the fateful Plaza Miranda bombing on August 1971.

Ninoy went through the same ordeal like any prisoner – he faced a military tribunal. He was found guilty by the government-controlled military commission and was sentenced to death by firing squad.

He spent almost eight years in solitary confinement. After suffering two heart attacks, he decided to go on exile in the United States to undergo a coronary bypass.

While in the US, Ninoy attended symposiums, lectures and gave speeches in freedom rallies against the Marcos dictatorship. He vowed to return to his country, to his people.

**‘The Filipino is worth dying for’**

In his speech before the Asia Society in New York on August 4, 1980, Ninoy said:

“I have asked myself many times: Is the Filipino worth suffering, or even dying, for? Is he not a coward who would readily yield to any colonizer, be he foreign or homegrown? Is a Filipino more comfortable under an authoritarian leader because he does not want to be burdened with the freedom of choice? Is he unprepared,

or worse, ill-suited for presidential or parliamentary democracy?

I have carefully weighed the virtues and the faults of the Filipino and I have come to the conclusion that he is worth dying for because he is the nation’s greatest untapped resource.”

Such is Ninoy’s loyalty and love for his country and his fellowmen that he was willing to give up his life for their freedom. On August 21, 1983, despite knowing that his life may be threatened, Ninoy went back to the Philippines. The shot that killed him reverberated and broke the cowardly silence that once gripped the hearts of his fellowmen. It awakened a sense of nationalism among Filipinos to face the ugly realities of Marcos’ totalitarian regime.

Two million people lined the streets to attend his funeral procession. They were overwhelmed by grief and anger. But along with their devastation rose a common good – they found solidarity.

Ninoy’s widow, the late Cory Aquino was thrust into the public eye. She ran for president against Marcos during the 1986 snap elections and compelled Filipinos to take the streets for a People Power Revolution.

For a generation who became witness to these events, may we never forget how one man’s courage and love for his country led us to the path to freedom. ■



LABAN. Corruption witness Rodolfo ‘Jun’ Lozada, center, sister Mary John Mananzan, left, join the crowd as they flash the ‘L’ sign for Laban, or Fight, during the commemoration of the 26th death anniversary of the late Senator Benigno ‘Ninoy’ Aquino and a mass for his wife, the late President Corazon ‘Cory’ Aquino, Friday, Aug. 21 in Makati City. The assassination of Senator Aquino in 1983 led to a ‘People Power’ that ousted the late strongman President Ferdinand Marcos and catapulted his wife Corazon Aquino into power.

AP Photo by Pat Roque

ANALYSIS

## Health care endgame near but uncertain

by CHARLES BABINGTON  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON – With hopes growing ever dimmer for a bipartisan accord, White House and Democratic leaders are considering a wide range of strategies for getting a health care bill passed when Congress returns from its summer recess.

Some are blunt. Some are complex and technical. All are problematic.

Insiders say it’s impossible to confidently predict which plan, if any, will prevail after lawmakers return the day after Labor Day. Will Democrats simply try to roll over minority Republicans? Will they try such uncertain paths as asking moderate Democrats, or perhaps a retiring Republican, to let a bill reach the Senate floor even if they plan to vote against it?

Possible outcomes, according to congressional and White House officials:

**A bipartisan agreement**

Still the preference of President Barack Obama and congressional leaders, prospects have dimmed this month as top Republicans have sharply criticized key Democratic goals. Most notably, the chief GOP negotiator – Sen. Charles Grassley of Iowa – signaled he would not support a bill, even if he liked it, unless most of his fellow Republicans signed on. That seems highly unlikely.

A truly bipartisan bill would draw significant numbers of House and Senate Republicans, and it surely would be among the least-ambitious scenarios under discussion. It might include widely

supported measures such as barring insurers from refusing to cover pre-existing medical conditions, and allowing people to carry their insurance from job to job. But it would not include a public insurance option, hefty subsidies to help the poor buy insurance and other priorities of the left.

Political insiders see little hope for a truly bipartisan bill emerging from the current negotiations.

**A 60-Democrats strategy**

This Democrats-only strategy presumably would produce the most robust, far-reaching changes to the health care system. Liberals say that if Republicans won’t play ball, there’s no point in compromising the agenda Obama campaigned for, including a public insurance option and coverage for nearly all Americans.

But this approach has many hurdles, and insiders consider it a long shot. Senate filibuster rules would force Democrats to persuade each of their 58 members and two independent supporters to vote down the 40 Republicans on issue after issue. Some moderate Democrats would balk on issues they oppose. And two liberal Democrats – Robert Byrd of West Virginia and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts – are seriously ill and often absent.

Even if the Senate passed a bill with Democratic votes only, conservative House Democrats might band with Republicans to reject it as too expensive. A Democrats-only approach would fuel Republican accusations of heavy-handed

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## GMA ranks 44th in Forbes power...

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national Chanda Kochhar, president of the ICICI Bank, was at 20th place while Indonesia’s Sri Indrawati, coordinating minister for economy and minister of finance, grabbed the 71st slot.

India’s Kiram Mazundar-Shaw, chairman of Biocon, was at 91st place and Hong Kong’s Eva Cheng, executive vice president of Amway Greater China and Hong Kong Southeast Asia, ranked 92nd in the list.

Pres. Arroyo’s ranking was

four notches below US First Lady Michelle Obama at No. 40, three below Oprah Winfrey (41) and two below Queen Elizabeth (42).

Tatiana Serafin, of Forbes.com, briefly described Pres. Arroyo: “In July, she became Southeast Asia’s first leader to meet US President Barack Obama in the White House, a boon to an otherwise lame-duck presidency. Arroyo’s tumultuous six-year term ends with new elections in May 2010.

Potential power grab in the works: Congressional allies are pushing through changes to the Constitution that would see the Philippines adopt a parliamentary system; then Arroyo could get around the presidential term limit by becoming prime minister. Critics contend this may further sink the stalling economy that earlier in the year hit a 10-year-low GDP growth of 0.4 percent. Arroyo also has her hands full dealing with rise in domestic terrorism.” ■

## Velarde opens El Shaddai...

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want anybody else to be our preacher,” Padilla told the Inquirer.

Melanie Jordas, 24, a member of the El Shaddai choir, said: “It’s OK with me if he becomes president because our country needs someone like him, someone who will have a concrete contribution to the nation.

**Deal with Erap**

According to Velarde, he had a deal with Joseph Estrada that he would support the ousted President if the latter managed to run for president again, and that Estrada agreed to support him for president if Estrada was disqualified

from running.

“We talked already, and I told him that I would join him in running. That’s a deal,” he told reporters.

But he said that he had also advised Estrada not to run again because he did not want to see the latter hurt again.

Velarde said that should he win, he would “reorganize the whole system and retire everyone.”

In his birthday message, however, he said: “My wife has always been by my side, supporting me in my dreams except for one dream, my dream for the presidency.” ■



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