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8 things Juan Ponce Enrile, Bongbong Marcos got wrong about martial law

By Regine Cabato and Chad de Guzman

9-11 minutes

Metro Manila (CNN Philippines) — On the eve of the anniversary of the declaration of martial law 46 years ago, former senator Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. released a video of his chat with Juan Ponce Enrile, the defense minister at the time.

The former Senate President, widely known as one of the architects of martial rule, later turned against the late strongman Ferdinand Marcos. He helped topple Marcos in the 1986 people power revolt that swept Corazon "Cory" Aquino to power. After a fallout with Aquino, Enrile was elected to the Senate and retired from politics in 2016.

Entitled "Enrile: A Witness to History," the 23-minute clip is the first episode of a series. Critics described it as an attempt to revise history.

Here are some statements Enrile made in the video and what the records show.

Claim: Enrile said, "They think we killed a lot of people. When

I was interviewed by someone sometime ago, I challenged her, name me one that we executed — that we killed — other than Lim Seng?"

Fact: More than 3,000 were killed during the Marcos regime, data from human rights group Amnesty International show. The Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP) also recorded 398 enforced disappearances from 1965 to 1986.

The Human Rights Victims Claims Board granted compensation to 11,103 claimants who experienced abuse, death, enforced disappearances, or torture in the Marcos era during its four-year run since 2014.

A 1974 Amnesty International report also said Enrile "admitted privately to the Archbishop of Manila that incidents of torture against martial law detainees had indeed occurred."

Other opposition figures who were killed or went missing during the Marcos regime are Marcos aide-turned-critic and "The Conjugal Dictatorship" author Primitivo Mijares, Archimedes Trajano, and former Senator Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, Jr. among others.



Bantayog ng mga Bayani, a martial law memorial in Quezon City, lists hundreds of martyrs and missing people from the Marcos regime.

Claim: Enrile denied 70,000 arrests under the Marcos regime. He said anyone who was arrested was "inconvenienced for a while, but they were released," and added the late opposition senator Pepe Diokno did not want to be released.

Fact: In the first three years of martial law alone, over 50,000 people were detained without charge or trial, according to an Amnesty International Mission 1982 report. A 1975 mission from the organization found 6,000 people still detained — and 71 out of 107 they interviewed said they had been tortured.

An account by renowned writer Jose "Butch" Dalisay, Jr. noted that former Senator Jose Diokno was arrested two days after the declaration of martial law, but he spent two years in prison. Some of those with him in Fort Bonifacio were opposition icon Ninoy Aquino, Manila Times publisher Chino Roces,

Philippines Free Press publisher Teddy Locsin, Sr., and student activist-turned-congressman Voltaire Garcia, among others.

Other personalities who experienced and survived detention were director Lino Brocka, National Union of People's Lawyers Chairman Neri Colmenares, journalist and poet Pete Lacaba, writer Bienvenido Lumbera, and former Senate President Nene Pimentel among others.

Claim: "During martial law, there were no massacres," Enrile said, claiming that Ninoy Aquino "invented the Jabidah massacre."

Fact: Then-Senator Ninoy Aquino first exposed the Jabidah massacre, the alleged killing of around 27 Tausug youth, in a 1968 privilege speech after he was approached by Jibin Arula, the lone survivor. This event prompted a young Nur Misuari to kickstart the Moro separatist movement.



Other massacres are of 1,500 Moros, including women and children in Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat, in September 1974.

The 2017 award-winning documentary "Forbidden Memory" chronicles the accounts of survivors of the event.

The Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission also reported the "Tong Umapuy massacre," wherein a Philippine Navy ship allegedly opened fire and killed 57 persons on a passenger boat in 1983.

About 20 rallyists were also killed while demanding for land reform during the 1985 Escalante massacre in Negros Occidental.

Claim: Enrile praised Marcos for "introducing land reform."

Fact: Constitutionalist Christian Monsod said that while Marcos' Rice and Roads program was a good idea, agrarian reform was still a loss as Marcos cronies lorded over agriculture.

"Tokenism naman iyon kasi ang coverage lang rice and corn, tapos ang dami pang exemptions ng mga crony ni Marcos," Monsod told CNN Philippines' Newsroom Ngayon. "Hindi sinama ang coconut... kasi nasa kamay niyan ni Eduardo [Danding] Cojuangco, Jr. Hindi sinama ang sugar, kasi nasa kamay ni Mr. [Roberto] Benedicto."

[Translation:That's tokenism because (the program) only covered rice and corn, and Marcos cronies had many exemptions. Coconut was not included... as it was in the hands of Eduardo Cojuangco, Jr. Sugar was not included, because it was in the hands of Mr. Benedicto.]

Conjuangco bought and controlled the United Coconut Planters Bank, but loan processes became too steep for farmers. He was involved in the Coco Levy Fund Scam, so coconut farmers are still unable to tap into the fund up to today.

Another trusted ally of Marcos — then-Negros Occidental Governor Armando Gustilo — held sway over the sugar industry. Under his term, farmers demanded land reform amid the collapse of sugar prices and unfair wages, leading to the Escalante Massacre.

Claim: Marcos said, "We were beginning to hear my father speaking out against the group of oligarchs that were controlling many segments of the economy and were not helping or supporting the national programs."

Fact: Marcos installed and empowered his own cronies in media outlets and major businesses.

Benjamin Romualdez, a brother of the first lady, held Meralco, First Philippine Holdings, Benguet Corporation, Philtranco Service Enterprise, and Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corporation.

Jose Campos, dubbed as the "Pharmaceutical King," headed United Laboratories, Inc., while Antonio Floirendo, Sr. has power over the banana business. Both were a front for Marcos' purchase of foreign properties.

The Presidential Commission on Good Government - an agency tasked to recover ill-gotten wealth from Marcos and his allies - filed civil cases against Alfredo Romualdez, Armando Romualdez, Jose L. Africa, Herminio Disini, Alberto T.

Looyuko, Rodolfo Cuenca, Bienvenido Tantoco, Lucio Tan, Fabian Ver, Geronimo Velasco, Anos Fonacier, Roman Cruz, Fe Roa Gimenez, Ofelia Trinidad, Alfonso Lim, Maj. General Ramas, Emilio Yap, Luz Bakunawa, Antonio Martel, Vicente Chuidian, Jose De Venecia, Alejo Ganut, Brig. Gen.

Echieverra, Tomas Dumpit, Ricardo Silverio, Roberto Abling, Peter Sabido, Remedios Argana, Jesus Tanchanco and

Eduardo Marcelo.

Claim: Enrile said the Bataan nuclear power plant "was derailed by Cory Aquino because of anger and revenge."

Fact: The Bataan plant, poised to be the country's first and only nuclear power station, was mothballed because of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 and Fukushima nuclear plant incident in 2011.

The plant's construction began in 1976 and was 98 percent complete in 1984. Until now, the government continues to pay ₱27 million a year to maintain it. The project cost \$2.3 billion dollars at that time.

READ: A look inside a sleeping giant: the Bataan Nuclear Power Plant

Claim: A clip of the late President Marcos was played, where he claimed he "asked the legislature to please pass a law proclaiming martial law."

Fact: When dictator Marcos placed the Philippines under martial law on September 21, 1972, the country was under the 1935 Constitution. Article VII, Section 10 (2) of that reads:

"The President shall be commander-in-chief of all armed forces of the Philippines and, whenever it becomes necessary, he may call out such armed forces to prevent or suppress lawless violence, invasion, insurrection, or rebellion, or imminent danger thereof, when the public safety requires it, he may suspend the privileges of the writ of habeas corpus, or place the Philippines or any part thereof under martial law."

The Constitution then did not require the President to ask legislative bodies to affirm the declaration of martial law, as it is

an exclusive power of the President. Provisions under the 1986 Constitution were placed to safeguard against this unchecked power.

Claim: Enrile said, "One of the reasons why Pres. Marcos finally declared martial law... was because there was already a working coalition between the Liberal Party and the New People's Army."

Fact: The Plaza Miranda bombing on August 21, 1971 left nine people dead and 100 injured at the Liberal Party miting de avance. The Marcos administration blamed the bombing on the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), which contradicts Enrile's recent claim that the two parties were working together at the time.

In fact, the CPP leadership called for a boycott of the 1986 snap elections that changed the tide against Marcos. As a result, a Stanford profile noted, "the organization was sidelined in the People Power Revolution" and would continue to butt heads with the Aquino administration.

CNN Philippines Senior Researcher Ella Hermonio contributed to this story.