

Gamma

Troops loyal to Ramos keeping vigil at Camp Aguinaldo: "Join us in this crusade for better government"

## REVOLTS

## Four Days that Ended an Era



*Lisa Beyer and Luningning Salazar kept up 24-hour coverage of the fast-breaking events. Their report:*

The Atrium is a fashionable Makati coffee-shop, one of the capital's most irrepressible hubs of political gossip, news leaks, rumour and intrigue. It was there on Saturday morning, Feb. 22, that Juan Ponce Enrile, for many years one of President Marcos's most loyal subordinates, Defence Minister and an architect of martial law, got word that Marcos men were coming to get him. Over a cup of coffee with Deputy Prime Minister José Rono, Enrile was defending the beleaguered president. A call came from a third cabinet colleague, Trade & Industry Minister Roberto Ongpin: "Johnny, can you do something about my security men? They've all been rounded up." Ongpin had 19 bodyguards. Enrile later recounted

the details of that afternoon to *Asiaweek*. "So I called my office. [Ongpin's guards] had been found in a restricted marine brigade area with firearms and were arrested." But by quizzing his intelligence men, Enrile also learned that the swoop had been staged to provide phoney evidence of a coup and justify the arrest of

### Preparing to attack Crame: No go



reform-minded officers in the "We Belong" movement.

Enrile had to move fast. He was himself a principal instigator of the movement. He returned to his luxurious home nearby, where soon afterwards his own security officers arrived in something of a fluster. "We're getting constant information that there's an order to round up all members of the movement," said Col. Gregorio ("Gringo") Honasan. Enrile assessed the odds, put on a bullet-proof vest, took up his Uzi sub-machine gun and threw a few essentials in a bag. Then he reached for the phone. "Eddy," he said in a strained voice, "I have this problem and I'd like to know if you'll help." After the briefest moment, Lt.-Gen. Fidel Ramos replied: "I'll be with you a hundred percent."

Thus was set the stage for the most dramatic weekend in recent Philippine history. In that moment was sealed, though he did not know it and would not have believed it, the fate of President Ferdinand Marcos. The rebellion of Enrile and Ramos, at least initially, had less to do with democracy and authoritarianism than with their own long-smouldering grievances. As Enrile tells it, the key element in

Ramos's decision was the secret reinstatement of General Fabian Ver as armed forces chief of staff. Ver immediately put his own men in key military positions "without consulting the minister of defence, without consulting Gen. Ramos. The junior officers were terribly upset."

The defence minister also called the Archbishop. Redoubtable, voluble Jaime Cardinal Sin wields immense moral suasion in the Philippines, and Enrile begged him to use it to intensify anti-government action and rally support to the Enrile-Ramos bid to overthrow the president and his loyal general. In the days that followed the Catholic church played a pivotal role in bringing Marcos down, with priests and nuns out in force and the propaganda machinery of the archdiocese fully harnessed for the effort. Sin was more concerned with installing Corazon Aquino as president and the military revolt was the answer to his prayers. The orchestration of ecclesiastical and civilian opposition gave birth to "people power."

**O**n arrival at his office in the Defence Ministry within Camp Aguinaldo, Enrile, 62 the week before, had his guards break out brand-new M-16 Armalites, still wrapped in plastic, and an arsenal of mortars and Israel-made Uzis and Galils. He ordered his information officer, lawyer Jose Flores, to call a press conference in the social hall. At around 6:45 p.m., Enrile and Ramos met reporters. The defence minister was dressed for a siege: fatigue jacket, blue denim trousers, sports shoes. Ramos, in a grey bush jacket and chomping a cigar, looked very much at ease for a man committed to armed insurrection against his chief. Enrile disclosed that he had been the man behind "We Belong" since its formation in 1982. "I caused [it to be] organised because ... there was an attempt to eliminate us and as a matter of self defence we had to [have] a group that wanted to reform the armed forces."

Ramos, too, had been involved. When the reform movement was emboldened to make a public stand at the Military Academy in Baguio on Mar. 21, 1985, "I was encouraged" and openly told the president to "be conscious of the aspirations of our young people in the armed forces," he said. "But we got no real effort to effect reforms." Marcos, said Ramos, ignored reports submitted by generals and colonels. "He had plenty of time to put the proper men in the right jobs, to stop graft and corruption in the armed forces, to stop political patronage ... and utilise efficiency." An irrevocable rift widened between professional soldiers, of whom Gen. Ramos saw himself as the epitome, and those under Gen. Ver, whose only merit was loyalty to Marcos. Added Enrile: "This division hap-

pened a long time ago because of discrimination in promotions, assignments, schooling privileges. I think it was inevitable that this should come to pass."

Honasan's men, in full combat gear and trained for just such an eventuality, were speedily deployed. By nightfall, lights glowed only in the lobby, the hall, Enrile's office and the press room. Across the twelve-lane E. De Los Santos Avenue at Camp Crame, headquarters of the integrated national police and the Philippine Constabulary, there was equal vigilance. Half the reformers were PC men. The conspirators said they had learned of a Malacañang plot to assassinate top opposi-

tion leaders. Ver, they said, had discussed the seizure and murder of Ramon Mitra, Aquilino Pimentel, Neptali Gonzales, Homobono Adaza, Luis Villafuerte and Rene Saguisag as well as business leaders Dante Santos, Jose Concepcion Jr., Vicente Paterno and Vicente Jayme and some clergymen including Jesuit lawyer Joaquin Bernas, president of the Ateneo University — as well as Enrile and Ramos.

"The plan was to kill us all and blame it on the communists," says Mitra, "then Marcos would have used that as an excuse to declare a state of emergency, equivalent to martial law." "As far back as 1982," said Enrile, "we were getting persistent



John K. Chua — *Asiaweek*

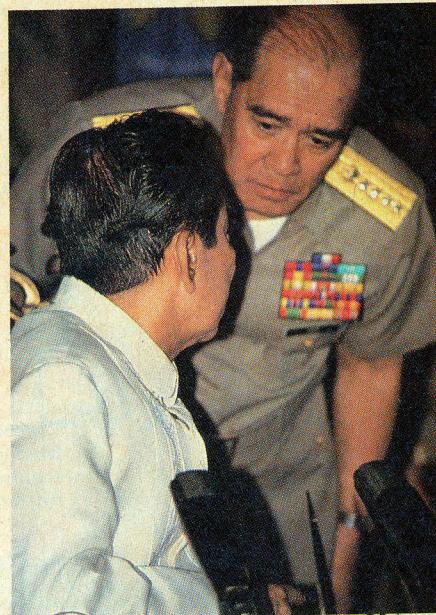
**Confronted by a determined crowd, an armoured personnel carrier retreats: "An endless stream of supporters"**

reports that there were efforts to eliminate us. The information was that elements from Mindanao were to be brought in to do the job. It was at that point we decided as a group to protect ourselves, and this is what is now known as the AFP reform movement." Enrile himself was at another meeting in the palace a fortnight ago. "Generals were present. There was a plan to arrest all the leaders of the opposition and some members of the parliament. I talked to one [regional unified commander] from the south and I understand certain hit men or hit lists directed against UNIDO leaders have been prepared."

On cheating in the elections, Enrile admitted "I am bothered by my conscience that we have done this to our people. In my own region [Cagayan Valley in the north] we cheated to the extent of 350,000 votes. I believe the president did not win. I cannot in conscience recognise him as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces." He went on: "I'm appealing to my brother-members of the cabinet to heed the will of the people expressed in the election." Gen. Ramos added: "The president of 1986 is not the same president to whom we pledged our loyalty. It is clear he's no longer the able and capable commander-in-chief because he has put his personal and family interests above the interests of the people." The general appealed to "fair-minded, dedicated, people-oriented members of the armed forces and the integrated national police to join us in

this crusade for better government."

Enrile also revealed for the first time that the assassination attempt on him on the eve of martial law in 1972 was a set-up to justify it. "[This] is an act of contrition, to atone. Had I known that it would be used to repress our people, I would not have agreed. It was to be for a noble purpose — to stabilise a situation in our land.



**Marcos and Ver confer: Argument**

But later it was corrupted. We do not have real democracy here. It's a democracy of manufactured votes."

Saturday evening after the press conference, Enrile talked by phone with Corazon Aquino in Cebu, where she had just finished speaking before some 50,000 at the city's Fuente Osmeña, the third in a series of nationwide rallies she had promised if cheated out of the presidency. She asked Enrile: "What can I do for you?" "Nothing, just pray for us," the defence minister replied. Enrile also informed the American and Japanese ambassadors and opposition leaders about his rebellion. Cardinal Sin urged Manilans to take food to Camp Aguinaldo, offer prayers and keep vigil. Broadcasting, Sin called on the people "to show solidarity and support in this very crucial period, when our two good friends have shown their idealism. Help them by your presence."

In Cebu, Aquino's aides, worried about assassination, hid her in a monastery.

The U.S. consul offered an American naval ship docked in readiness to evacuate American citizens. Aquino's aides rejected the gesture. One told *Asiaweek*: "It wouldn't look nice if our president is seen seeking refuge in an American vessel." MP Ramon Mitra's offer of sanctuary in his native Palawan was also declined. Aquino decided to fly to Manila the following afternoon in a private Cessna plane despite fears that it could be intercepted and shot

down.

After 10:00 p.m. Saturday night, Enrile, interviewed on the Catholic radio station Veritas, revealed that Ver had agreed "not to attack us. I hope they respect that. If not, there might be bloodshed and Marcos will answer to the world ... [as] butcher of his own soldiers and countrymen. He cannot scare us any more." He refused Marcos's offer of clemency. "We are not alone in this fight," Enrile reminded the president. "We are ready to die for our country. Enough is enough, Mr. President, your time is up."

The first general to defect was Brig.-Gen. Ramon Farolan, Marcos's customs commissioner, who arrived in battle fatigues. Then came Postmaster General J. Roilo Golez, a navy man. He told *Asiaweek* he was disturbed by election fraud and intimidation, and the walkout by Comelec's computer tabulators. He suggested "a compromise transition government." General Romeo Espino, Ver's predecessor as chief of staff, arrived, as did Brig.-Gen. Manuel Salientes and even movie & TV star Nora Aunor.

**A**fter midnight, Marcos summoned the media. "I call upon the minister of national defence and the vice chief of staff to stop this stupidity and surrender." No warrant of arrest had been issued, said Marcos, but they were acting "as if they were part of an aborted coup and assassination plot against the president and First Lady supposed to take place tonight." The president claimed "our men captured officers in the presidential command, who revealed the conspiracy and we were able to neutralise three-fourths of the force without bloodshed ... about two battalions." He said commanders had organised troops to eliminate the [Enrile-Ramos] forces, which "can easily be wiped out with artillery and tank fire." He presented the First Lady's former escort officer, a certain Ricardo Morales, who confessed: "I am a participant in a plot to attack Malacanang and secure the president." He named as leader Enrile's aide Col. Gregorio Honasan. The conspiracy "was encouraged and supported, perhaps financially, by the opposition. I cannot believe that Minister Ponce Enrile or Gen. Ramos are in this plot. I want to talk to them."

Countered Enrile: "The people want change of leadership. There are ways he [Marcos] can depart peacefully and quietly and enjoy his remaining years in retirement. It can be done in a civilised manner." Manila's ambassador to Thailand, retired Lt.-Gen. Rafael Ileto, offered to mediate. Ramos told Ileto: "It is not about the reformist movement, the army, but whether we, claiming to be a democratic republic, recognise the manifest will of

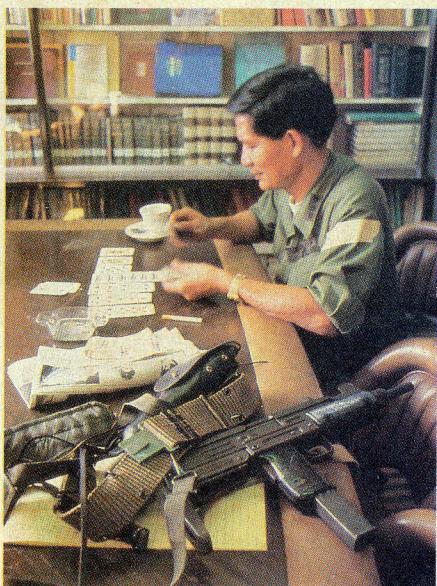
the people." Added Enrile: "I hope the man who has led this country for 20 years will perform one noble act, prevent bloodshed and recognise the winds of change."

By early Sunday morning, the crowd, now 40,000, was swelling and becoming restive. Food was pouring in. "I probably gained weight," joked Enrile. "For the first time, the people are with the military. Before, we were viewed as enemies of the people. This is the resurrection of the armed forces as the true guardian of the people. People out there are protecting us instead of we them." About 3:30 that afternoon Enrile transferred his men from GHQ to join Ramos across the highway in Camp Crame. "We abandoned Aguinaldo because it was too large to handle," he later explained. One of his lieutenants, however, told *Asiaweek*: "Some marines arriv-

It's my way of helping." Confessed Ping Makaintal, 19, an accounting student: "I was afraid to go out last night, but I felt guilty staying home, so here I am."

At 6:30 p.m. Sunday, Ramos and Enrile held their second press conference. Enrile revealed he had spoken to Marcos by phone, telling him "the matter is no longer negotiable." Ramos told newsmen "so many officers of all four commands as well as enlisted men have joined us, but we do not know of any single man who has joined them [Marcos and Ver]." Military commanders of 40 provinces in all twelve regions and the four districts of Metro-Manila had pledged loyalty. "I think that's an indication of the popular support of this movement. The new armed forces are being supported by people power." Ramos said he had 17 armoured tanks and two helicopters ready if Marcos-Ver troops attacked. Enrile expected the situation "to get lively" by nightfall. "We are not running away," Ramos declared, though he acknowledged two battalions of Ver's scout rangers and one marine battalion under Brig.-Gen. Artemio Tadiar were ready to advance from Camp Aguinaldo across the highway and a column of armoured personnel carriers from Fort Bonifacio was on its way down Ortigas Avenue on the right.

Salvador Laurel arrived, just in from Cebu. Unperturbed, he had come to "congratulate Minister Enrile and Gen. Ramos for their great act of courage." The three then retired to Ramos's curtained office. Venerable opposition leader Lorenzo Tanada, 87, came to promise mass actions, saying "we won't stop until we get through that barricade at Mendiola [the bridge in front of Malacañang]." Rene Saguisag and Teodoro Locsin conferred with Ramos and Enrile and decided to ask Aquino to go on the air later in the evening to plead for non-violence. Ramos ordered leaflets dropped to Marcos loyalists: "What good is killing each other now? Let us join hands and together build a better tomorrow ... be heroes without having to die ... show the world we believe in God and we are a truly Christian country."



Col. Honasan: A "round-up order"

ed at eight this morning and we're not sure they're friendly." Aguinaldo's open terrain would have been harder to defend. Mid-afternoon, Enrile and Ramos made formal demands that Marcos transfer the government to Corazon Aquino in an orderly and peaceful manner.

Among the people-power thousands was Freddie Aguilar, a well-known pop singer, who told *Asiaweek*: "The minister and the general united us all in a non-violent way." Movie star Aunor, 32, a former KBL campaigner who donated shirts and cigarettes to the soldiers, said: "I believe in what they are doing." Retired doctor Hector Tagle, 70, volunteered his services, "the least I can do to help my countrymen." Said social worker Fernando Cruz, 39: "Most of us can't take up arms. I came out of gratitude to Gen. Ramos." Betty Yucon, 23, a pretty insurance clerk, "baked cassava cookies.

**S**unday at 8:30 p.m., APCs advancing from Fort Bonifacio were stopped by civilians, who embraced soldiers. But negotiations with Gen. Tadiar broke down and he issued an ultimatum: his battalions would hit the rebels' stronghold in 30 minutes if they did not surrender. Ramos had earlier told *Asiaweek* he and Enrile had sent "a high-level emissary to negotiate with Tadiar." Ramos, however, slept two hours — the first time in three days, an aide said — while Enrile had a bite to eat. More soldiers were pinning to their uniforms the reform movement's symbol: a small national flag with the red uppermost. A colonel told *Asiaweek* the two thousand

printed were not enough for "an endless stream of supporters from everywhere."

Downstairs, white-robed nuns, told of the ultimatum, began saying the rosary. By the statue of old soldier Gen. Rafael Crame, a group of privates swapped war stories of Mindanao. Said Lt.-Col Virgilio Bio: "Without the people out there we might have been killed last night." At Gate II, the crowds sang "*Bayan Ko*" (*My Country*), while at Gate I a noise barrage reverberated with the opposition signal of two auto-horn honks. At a makeshift medical station doctors and nurses handed out aspirin and nuns and priests passed around biscuits. At Ortigas and EDSA people lay down in front of two armoured vehicles. Marcos loyalists on them joked with youngsters who plied them with food and flowers.

fire at their fellow men, their parents, wives and children, whose only fault is to stand up for what they think is right."

By radio Ramos told Marcos's soldiers: "You are being abused to prolong the Marcos régime which is now in its dying days." If you join us, he said, "you can be sure of a life of decency ... adequate opportunities for your children and loved ones." He disclosed that some Marcos cabinet members "are being placed under house arrest and we are very concerned about their fate." There was no way his accusations could be verified but they helped break morale of government men and loyalist troops.

The crucial moment was before dawn Monday, Feb. 23. Gen. Ramos had set up a clandestine back-up radio station after saboteurs destroyed the 50-kw trans-

mitter," said Col. Antonio Sotelo of the Air Force's 15th Strike Wing. Meanwhile, however, loyalist marines in three trucks and five amphibious jeeps had captured the logistics command inside Camp Aguinaldo and were crossing E. De Los Santos Avenue to close in on Camp Crame. At 5.45 a.m., marines fired teargas canisters at the crowd.

At 6.27 a.m. on rebel radio DZRB, TV celebrity June Keithley announced that "Mr. Marcos and Bongbong have just taken off from the Manila International Airport." She added — also falsely — that Ver's wife and Imelda Marcos had left at 3 p.m. Monday afternoon and Marcos' daughters Imee and Irene the night before, leaving Gen. Ver "alone in Malacañang." Keithley told loyalist troops: "You are not fighting for anything or anyone any more." The report was replayed for fifteen minutes and is credited with breaking the determination of the attacking marines.

Corazon Aquino called the station to thank the people for support "given not only to me and Doy Laurel but to Gen. Ramos and Minister Enrile," and to urge them to continue "peaceful, non-violent moves." Quipped anchorwoman Keithley: "At least we know we are no longer in the bedroom" (a reference to a sexist campaign remark by Marcos). Before nine Monday morning, Enrile and Ramos emerged to greet the crowds outside. Enrile announced that "democracy has been restored to us. Henceforth, the armed forces will not be loyal to any one man but to the people, the nation, the constitution, the flag." A roar went up: "Johnny, Johnny, Johnny!" Added Enrile: "Let us prosecute the killers of Ninoy Aquino." The people screamed: "Ninoy, Ninoy, Ninoy!"



Col. Santiago talking to marines loyal to Marcos: "Let us join hands"

At midnight Gen. Ramos took a jog around the perimeter with two guards but no sidearm. Back at headquarters at 2.03 a.m., he lit up a cigar and reported that a Huey helicopter had been flown in by defecting air force pilots. On his mahogany table were a book by Dr. Fred Schwarz entitled *You Can Trust the Communists (to be Communists)*, a bible open at Psalm 91 and a back issue of *Asia-week* with himself on the cover. At 3:00 a.m. in the war room, he told huddled journalists it would be "completely honorable on your part to move down to the first floor. This building is not artillery-proof." He said an attack was expected by daybreak (Monday morning) from loyalist troops two km away on Santolan Road. On radio, he appealed to the people "to meet the forces organised by Marcos and Ver. But we don't expect Marcos troops to

mitter of church-owned Radio Veritas in Malolos, north of Manila. His foresight proved critical in turning the tide to the rebels. At 5.10 a.m. Ramos reported "an overwhelming military force has been assembled and directed to move against us." He warned "it will be blood on his [Marcos's] hands if he does not do anything ... to reverse the situation.... Please tell the world it is Mr. Marcos who is now about to inflict violence, terror and vengeance against our people here in Camp Crame." At around 6.20 a.m. seven Sikorskys bristling with rockets and cannon landed on the parade ground. The rebels braced themselves for a bloody attack. But the 17 pilots and gunners, sent by Marcos and Ver to destroy the PC-INP headquarters building housing Enrile, Ramos and their troops, got out and saluted. Wild jubilation ensued. "We followed our con-

**B**ut at 9.10 a.m. Monday Marcos appeared on Channel 4 to deny he had fled. "I am taking the oath tomorrow and I intend to stay as president." With him was Imelda Marcos, daughters Imee and Irene and grandchildren. Gen. Ver argued on air with his commander-in-chief. "The air force is ready to mount an attack. Fighters are flying now." Marcos dismissed him with a salute. Asked in the televised press conference if he would declare an emergency, the president replied: "Now that you mention it, I hereby declare a curfew from six tonight." That elicited howls of laughter from watching rebel soldiers. Marcos said he was authorising loyalist troops to seize all television and radio stations. Of the Crame crowds, he scoffed: "If you are going to be frightened by 2,000 civilians then let's not talk about running a government." Suddenly, the TV screens went blank. Rebel soldiers led by Col. Mariano Santiago had overrun the broadcasting station after a three-hour fight.