

The Conjugal Dictatorship of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos

Primitivo Mijares
1976 Edition

The setting sun over Manila Bay gave a snugness to President Marcos' private Study Room at Malacanang that early evening of September 22, 1972. Marcos sat serene in his study, glancing once in a while at the bevy of red telephone receiver sets which linked his office with military camps all over the country.

What am I about to do? Marcos must have asked himself. Then, he imagined that in whatever direction he would be looking there would be soldiers sealing and closing down newspaper offices, and radio and television stations; soldiers knocking at and/or down locked doors and inviting or dragging out forcibly persons previously listed in an "order of battle" to go with them in a van; camps filled with men and women who have made the mistake of disagreeing with him or acting rather headily in seeking to consign Marcos prematurely to the dung heap of a lameduck presidency. How pitiful they would soon be, he must have mused.

Marcos pressed a button in his intercom, and when an ever ready aide responded to say "yes, sir," he commanded: "Get me Secretary Enrile." And then, with his line to the communications room aide still open, Marcos muttered to himself: "*Masyadong mabagal ang mga taong 'yan kung kailan pa naman kailangan magmadali.*" (Those people [without alluding to anyone in particular] move so sluggishly at a time when I want them to move fast enough.) Within a few minutes, he determined that his secretary of national defense, Juan Ponce Enrile, had left his office at Camp Emilio Aguinaldo *1 rather early in the day.

(*1. The main building at Camp Aguinaldo houses the office of the secretary of national defense and serves also as the armed forces general headquarters. Originally named Camp Murphy in honor of Frank Murphy, last American governor-general in the Philippines, the camp was renamed in 1962 in honor of the President of the first Republic.)

He was located by Sgt. Arturo Boquiren, agent on duty at the communications room near the President's Study Room, in the house of a "friend." Somewhat irritated, Marcos ordered Enrile in the following manner "Secretary Enrile? Where are you? You have to do it now . . . ya, ya, the one we discussed this noon. We cannot postpone it any longer. Another day of delay may be too late." Continuing his orders obviously after being interrupted with some remarks by Enrile, Marcos went on: "Make it look good. *Kailangan seguro ay may masaktan o kung mayroon mapatay ay mas-mabuti.* (May be it would be better if somebody got hurt or killed.) . . . O, hala, sigue, Johnnv (Okav. eo ahead) and be sure the story catches the 'Big News' and 'Newswatch'. . . and call me as soon as it is over."

My newsman's instinct told me that I would be handling the biggest news story of my life. I gained some inkling on the unfolding drama days earlier from the President himself. He instructed me during one of our luncheon sessions to prepare a "situationer" (a news round-up) on the encounters between elements of the government's armed forces and the Communist New People's Army, the "landing" of combat weapons and war materiel for the NPAs along the coast of Digoyo in Palanan, Isabela, the "terror bombings" in Manila and suburbs, and the violent demonstrations of the radicals.

"Make sure that the Daily Express puts out the situationer on or before Sunday (September 24, 1972)," Marcos said to me. "Tell them it is a direct