Saturday - February 22, 1986

Eden and I were just preparing for bed. I was adjusting our mini radio on the headboard of our bed looking for station Radio Veritas. We have been tuning in on this station ever since Cory Aquino bought the eight to nine slot to broadcast to the Filipino people. When the dial of the radio hit 846, the number of truth, the sound that hit us was that of Minister Juan Ponce Enrile’s voice making an appeal to the people. He was speaking rather laboriously in Tagalog (his Ilocano accent was very strong): “…we are appealing to the Filipino people and to the entire world to help us. We are right now here at the Ministry of National Defense building and we are prepared to die. Mr. Marcos had planned to have us and members of the Reformist Movement picked up together with the members of the Opposition Party. We believe that Marcos is no longer the legitimate president of the Republic. His forces are out to kill us and we are prepared to be killed.” In the background could be heard a lot of voices of reporters asking questions, some speaking in whispers, telephone ringing. There was an air of urgency. The urgency of the messages being aired reminded me of the shortwave station (BBC) over which my father used to listen to clandestinely during the early part of the Second World War. The next voice was that of Vice Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Fidel Ramos saying “We have decided to sever ties with Mr. Marcos whom we no longer acknowledge as our president. We are calling on everybody to help us. We need the people’s support now!” Then Enrile again “Please come to Camp Aguinaldo and help us. We need you!” They spoke alternately citing the reasons for their decision to break away from Marcos. The main one of which is their reliable information that Marcos had ordered the arrest of all leaders of the Opposition party and of the Reformists (the military officers who initiated the reform of the Armed Forces of the Philippines). They also cited the rampant cheating Marcos employed in the recently concluded snap presidential elections.

For several minutes, Eden and I could not talk. I guess we were both thinking of the worst. I did not find any piety in me. I did not pray. I could only think of our son Noel, who, earlier had gotten my permission to use our car to go to a party at the Greenhills area. It was then around 9:30 p.m. and he was not yet home. It was only at this point that I prayed several times to God to make Noel tune in to Radio Veritas so that, when he hears what is going on, he would go home immediately. But I had my misgivings because I know that he never tuned in over the AM band. It turned out, as I learned from him later, that he and his group did tune in over Radio Veritas, but they did not consider the situation serious enough as to merit their breaking up their party and go home. Finally, Eden and I found our voices. Her first reaction was “My God! Ben what is happening?” Then, “Where is that boy?! (meaning our son, Noel)”

Then, the voice of Butch Aquino came over the radio requesting his ATOM group to join him at the Isetan Department Store in the Araneta Commercial Center in Cubao. This announcement was repeated several times. Then came the voice of his eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin issuing out a call for all Filipinos to come to the Camp Aguinaldo Area to support Mr. Enrile and Gen. Ramos. You can just imagine my feeling then. Here we were known activists and yet when the call for real action came we could not move. My reason for not going out was my concern for our son Noel. I just had to be home in case anything untoward should happen.

At around 1:30 the following morning, Melo Fernandez and Mar del Castillo came to the house asking me to go with them to Camp Aguinaldo. I had to excuse myself citing the fact that my son was not yet home and I did not know what time he was coming home. Melo and Mar went to Camp Aguinaldo and found a few hundred people already assembling at EDSA in front of Camp Aguinaldo and Crame. They came back around 5:00 a.m., Sunday. In the meantime, Noel came home at 3:00 in the morning. It was only then that Eden and I were able to sleep, albeit, listlessly. At 5:30 in the morning…..

Sunday - February 23, 1896

Eden and I took off. We passed by for Didi and Menchu. Didi turned out to be stranded in Iloilo City where he delivered some paintings. So, only Menchu came with us. We went directly to Camp Aguinaldo via Daang Cainta and White Plains. I avoided EDSA because I surmised the traffic was heavy in that direction. True enough, we never reached EDSA. Instead, we ended up at the Santolan gate of Camp Aguinaldo. I was a bit disappointed because there were just perhaps around five hundred or so people milling about the vicinity of the gate. Menchu found a companion, a co-teacher of hers. All the while we were listening over Radio Veritas. After sometime, I told the girls that since there was no action at Santolan, we might as well go to vicinity of Radio Veritas which was then also being barricaded by the people because of some threats of being raided by loyalist troops of Marcos. At the Radio Veritas, we found a phalanx of students manning the barricades. We were able to get as far as the main gate of the station. The girls and I then had lunch… some sandwiches which Eden prepared. There was not much action there either. So, around 2:00 p.m., I decided to go back to Camp Aguinaldo. This time, I got caught in the maze of roadblocks and traffic. We reached EDSA and the entrance to White Plains subdivision after more than an hour of maneuvering in and out of the side streets. The entire width of EDSA at this point was barricaded by people sitting on small sandbags and there were also some vehicles parked along and across EDSA. Menchu and her co-teacher detached themselves from Eden and I. She had to call up her children to assure them that she was all right. At about his time, an announcement was made by somebody on board a Fiera with a PA system that a column of tanks and marines were approaching from the direction of Guadalupe Bridge. At first, I thought “How corny can this guy get… the marines are coming?” It sounded just like in the movies… However, after a while, a motorist coming from the direction of the tank column confirmed the Oritgas-EDSA intersection! So, the announcer on board the Fiera began making appeals for heavy vehicles to make a dash to the Ortigas-EDSA area to barricade the intersection.