

Francisco Tatad 1
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JSPS Philippine Technocracy Project
Transcript of Interview

Francisco “Kit” Tatad

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Third World Studies Center

Palma Hall University of the Philippines

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Interviewers: Professor Yutaka Katayama, Professor Cayetano Paderanga, Jr., PhD and Professor Teresa Encarnacion Tadem, PhD

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TATAD: I saw Cesar Virata in a dinner recently and I mentioned that you are doing the Oral History Technocracy Project. He said you have several interviews with him.

KATAYAMA: We have finished the interviews already. We are now editing them.

TATAD: Good.

KATAYAMA: We are very much appreciative of your cooperation with our team. I think I already gave you a background on the project when I met you. We had interviewed many of the key figures during the Marcos administration. You are one of those personalities. This is just for academic purposes. We plan to publish at least two books based on the interviews. I hope that your interview would be one of the chapters of the book when we finish our interviews. However, some of the technocrat respondents were very careful in answering some sensitive topics. If you find some of our questions a little bit sensitive, and you don't like them, please do not hesitate to inform us. We would embargo other questions, and we will also video-tape your answers. We will not allow anybody to view the videos but all documents will be donated to the University of the Philippines (UP) Library and the Kobe University Library. So may we start? ...

TATAD: Let me just say that I am very pleased to have this interview with you and I am very happy to [be of] some assistance... I think this is the time to record our history accurately for purposes of scholarship.... Very little scholarship had been done on the Marcos government. Discussions on Marcos are still very much dominated by partisanship. So this is a breath of fresh air;

KATAYAMA: We always start with questions on family background...

TADEM: How was your childhood? Was it a middle class childhood?

TATAD: I am Bicolano. I come from Catanduanes, an island province in the Bicol region which is located at the country's typhoon belt. I grew up in a poor family of nine children. I was the middle child. I attended a public school in the province. I had to walk 54 kms every week to go to third year high school in another town so on my third year I moved to Manila

because there was no other way to finish school. I found myself working to finish high school. I finished my high school in Quezon City and after that I took all sorts of jobs again to survive. And finally I was able to persuade some members of Congress to allow me to write speeches for them. They did not inquire about my qualifications... I found a more or less steady job that supported me through college. I went to the University of Santo Tomas, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. Well, unfortunately, I became a troublesome student. I led an academic demonstration on my third year regarding university education. It did not have anything to do with political issues. Because of what I did, I was refused admission to the next level. However I had taken courses in graduate school because I was enrolling in subjects where I could learn and not for the purpose of getting good grades. I was already writing in the university. I wrote fiction that was published in the region's only English magazine on my second year. I established my writing preferences very early in my career. I was in journalism, actively writing for the French agency for three years before I moved to [*The Manila*] *Bulletin* as a diplomatic reporter and later as a columnist. On my third year, I was invited to join the Cabinet.

KATAYAMA: Can we go back to the initial phase? ...You mentioned that your family was poor. So how many hectares of land did you own?

TATAD: We owned some property in Catanduanes but that was immaterial because our land produced nothing.

KATAYAMA: So what was your family's major source of income?

TATAD: My father went to an agricultural school. He was one of the few in that small town who had some kind of education but he was allergic to so many things. Whenever he came in contact with mud, his body got swollen so he could not farm. So he became a gentleman. My mother was a seamstress. She was a very bright woman. She managed everything.

KATAYAMA: So both of them were natives of Catanduanes.

TATAD: Yes.

KATAYAMA: You are 9 or 7 in the family? Are you the eldest in the family?

TATAD: Fifth.

KATAYAMA: How many went to the university?

TATAD: All except one. We transplanted ourselves to the city. Well, I saw the first motorized vehicle when I was in high school in Catanduanes. There were no roads connecting my town to the next.

TADEM: What was your town?

TATAD: Gigmogto. That is the smallest town in the smallest province in Bicol. It is an island province. I went to school barefoot most of the time, rain or shine.

KATAYAMA: In your childhood, what kind of images did you have of Manila or outside of the small town?

TATAD: Manila did not exist. The only world that we knew was the small town. We didn't even know the province. We had no communication.

PADERANGA: So you were in Catanduanes up to high school?

TATAD: ... I was in town throughout my elementary years. I completed the six year elementary school in five years and then I went to high school, up to second year high school. The town school no longer offered third year high school. The only way to finish high school was to go to the next town, which was 27 km away. I would go there every weekend. I had to pass seven mountains to get there.

KATAYAMA: So you stayed in somebody's house?

TATAD: Yes, I boarded with some distant relatives. They took me in for nothing.

KATAYAMA: They supported everything?

TATAD: My provisions came from home. I would go to the next town Baras.

KATAYAMA: But you performed well during your elementary years?

TATAD: I was very good. I could recite back several pages of a book that I had read. My memory was very good.

KATAYAMA: So your parents expected something from you?

TATAD: I do not know what my parents expected from me. The whole town listened to me particularly the old people. I would imitate and mimick the mayor and the preacher. I was very good at that. I was a one-man entertainer of the town.

KATAYAMA: So you were already a good communicator during your childhood?

TATAD: If I was, I did not know it.

KATAYAMA: Which year was your birth year?

TATAD: 1939. The things I remember most were the airplanes flying over us. According to my grandma and my older brothers and sisters, whenever there was a plane, I would say “*Eroprano, Hitlet... ragan taas*,” which means *eroplano ni Hitler tumatakbo sa itaas* [Hitler’s plane is flying in the sky]. How I got to know Hitler, I do not know. It was probably from propaganda.

KATAYAMA: So you only had recollections of airplanes?

TATAD: Later on, Japanese soldiers being beheaded.

PADERANGA: Japanese soldiers were beheaded? They were the ones being beheaded?

TATAD: Some were beheaded by the guerillas. These were the images.

KATAYAMA: So did you witness any atrocity?

TATAD: No, not real atrocities, the bodies in poles being paraded around town.

KATAYAMA: How did you find out about your talent and your comparative advantage? You had good memory and you can mimick people.

PADERANGA: So you were on top of your class?

TATAD: Yes.

KATAYAMA: How did teachers and other people encourage you?

TATAD: The normal sort of thing. Teachers did not speak English that well. There were no books in my town because my town was poor. After big typhoons, everything was down. We sometimes used the other side of the banana leaf to write because there was no paper. We used a stylus on the powdery side of the banana leaf to write. That was how poor our place was. One day, I saw a book in my house. For all our poverty, our house attracted visitors. A hunter who shot birds left a book in the house, which I read. It was a novel by Thomas Mann, *The Holy Sinner*. Although I did not understand everything, I went on reading the book and then got the drift of the story eventually. That was my first English class education.

PADERANGA: What was the quality of high school education at that time?

TATAD: Very good.

PADERANGA: Even in Baras?

TATAD: Very good. *Modern Times in the Living Past*, it was good. We had one book in high school and not everyone could read it. The teacher gave it to me and told me to read it in class.

KATAYAMA: How did you find yourself among your classmates in high school?

TATAD: We were all friends. I was very small. Outside school, we would play hide and seek. Because I perspired easily it was not easy to get hold of me. I would slip away from my friends. It was a natural paradise. We were in the state of nature so we enjoyed it.

TADEM: So your classmates were also from the lower class? Did you also have rich classmates?

PADERANGA: You were in the upper strata of your town, but the income level was so low that it did not really matter much?

TATAD: My parents were more creative probably but the material condition was the same with everyone else. For instance, almost everyone had land but nobody planted anything. However, my parents were planting things.

PADERANGA: So Catanduanes was mostly producing coconut?

TATAD: Coconut and abaca at that time. My mother was sewing clothes and at the same time managing the rice field.

PADERANGA: So you had a rice field?

TATAD: Everyone had. This was a staple for everyone.

PADERANGA: Rice fields needed to be irrigated while coconut land was usually planted on steep land. So there were differences between the two.

TATAD: But you know, we had to rely on camote, cassava, and other crops... because every typhoon, the rice grains that dropped to the ground were usually damaged. So even before I came to the city, I was toughened by adversity already. I took a boat without a ticket. In the middle of the sea, the conductor asked me where my ticket was and I said I did not have one.

PADERANGA: So you did not come with your family yet?

TATAD: No I was alone.

PADERANGA: You came here before your family?

TATAD: My brother was in Manila working as a carpenter in a construction camp.

PADERANGA: Is he the one who did not finish school?

TATAD: No. I have one sister who did not believe in education. She said, "We will all die, anyway so what's the need to go to school?"

PADERANGA: When you came to Baras, did they have more books than Gigmoto?

TATAD: They had some books.

PADERANGA: Would they have a library?

TATAD: I do not think so.

KATAYAMA: What kind of books impressed you most when you were in high school?

TATAD: As I said, I was reading a lot of history books. Those fascinated me precisely because I was given the responsibility to read the books and repeat what I read in class.

PADERANGA: What was the book?

TATAD: *Modern Times in the Living Past*. That was a textbook.

KATAYAMA: How would you assess your memory?

TATAD: ... One day, I was talking to [President Ferdinand] Marcos when I was in the Cabinet already; he was reputed to have a photographic memory. So I told him, "You know Mr. President, I used to have a photographic memory but I lost it when I began to think." He did not like the comment.

PADERANGA: He liked to see other things. I am curious, when you entered UST [University of Santo Tomas], did you have any difficulties, in other words, from your high school in Baras...

TATAD: No I did not go to UST. I went to Baras for third year high school. In fourth year high school, I went to Roosevelt High School in Quezon City.

PADERANGA: But you did not have any problem, [transferring] from Baras to Roosevelt High School?

TATAD: If I had, I did not realize I had. For instance, in class recitations there were these questions and I would raise my hand. I was trying to say something, and then the class laughed. I realized that I was not talking in Tagalog but I was talking in Bikol.

KATAYAMA: Who supported you when you came to Quezon City? Was your family still supporting you?

TATAD: No, my brother was working here.

PADERANGA: He was a working student?

TATAD: Yes. He was studying law.

PADERANGA: So you were also a working student?

TATAD: Yes. After high school, I could not immediately go to college. I did not have the means. I started selling all sorts of things, household items in Philam, which was a new village then. I was selling things like refrigerator, deodorants, and insecticides. I was selling

advertising space for the Far Eastern Alumni Directory, selling health insurance for the Lopez clinic, etc. I was selling so many other things... But I was not earning enough money. I would walk the distance from Homesite to Binondo, Manila everyday.

PADERANGA: You were used to it, in the province.

TATAD: Yes, it was not a problem.

KATAYAMA: How many went to college or university in your town?

TATAD: In Catanduanes? I do not recall, only a few.

PADERANGA: I have two questions: first, when you got to UST, you no longer had the adjustment problem because you were coming from Roosevelt High School but the other one was, why did you decide to take Journalism?

TATAD: I had some problems there because when I got to UST I enrolled in the Faculty of Letters. I'll answer the second question later. I went to the classroom and realized that I was probably the oldest among the students. Playing detective, I found out these people were all topnotchers and valedictorians and they were not talking to other people but were only talking amongst themselves. All geniuses. What was happening here? I was uncomfortable there. Why Arts and Letters? Because somehow I fell in love with the English language. That first book I read played a critical role in my decision. I think I was also influenced by the conversation I had with my brother with whom I was staying. When I was going to college, I told him I think I wanted to study Letters. "No you should study Law. There's no money in Journalism," he said. When I heard his reason, I decided to go to Arts and Letters. I was pissed off with the idea that I was going to a university to earn more money. It was a no no. Later on, in the Senate, I thought that I should've gone to Law because I encountered people who asked me to represent them in court. "Can you please help us?" "No, I cannot. I am not a lawyer." "Is it because we do not have money, that you say you are not a lawyer? How come you are arguing with [Arturo] Tolentino on constitutional law?" These were some of the things I did not foresee.

KATAYAMA: Why UST [University of Santo Tomas] when there were other options? Did anybody advise you to go to UST?

TATAD: When I left Catanduanes I thought I needed some connections. I got the name of a Dominican priest from Catanduanes who was from UST. So I looked for him because I wanted to have a job in order to study. Unfortunately, he was not there. He was in Polilio Island. Moreover, when I got the chance to study, I persuaded some members of Congress to allow me to write speeches for them. UST was the most convenient because it offered a night school... Ateneo de Manila, I heard about it, and the University of the Philippines (UP) but they were out of the question.

KATAYAMA: What kind of work did you engage in during your UST days?

TATAD: Before UST, I was a salesman. When I was in UST, I was a speech writer.

PADERANGA: Already when you were in UST?

TATAD: Yes.

KATAYAMA: With whom?

TATAD: With a congressman from my place. Before you arrived, I was telling Professor [Katayama] that I was doing all these things but I was not earning enough to support myself to school so I decided to go to Congress and talk to one congresswoman there. I asked her if she needed help in writing her speeches. "You? Can you do it?" She gave me a topic to write on and from there she used it... And she was a bar topnotcher ha! But the one who hired me was the congressman from my place. He did not have a need for regular staff. When I look back to these things, I get embarrassed because they were really cautious. <laughs> Not merely good enough.

PADERANGA: What subjects in UST fascinated you? Philosophy?

TATAD: Philosophy, family literature, ethics. Philosophy was tough for me. Ethics... I had a memorable story about my ethics class. The ethics class was being taught by the dean, who was a Spanish priest. Although all my papers were perfect, I only received a grade of 79. I said, "Father, there is something wrong with my grades. All my examinations were hundred percent or barely one hundred percent, why did I get 79?" "*Mi hombre*, this is the ethics class yet you were always talking to the girls."

<Everyone laughs.>

TATAD: Behavior is really important you know! In the [University of] Santo Tomas at that time, the rules were very strict. There was a prefect of discipline. One lane was devoted for the women and another for the boys and you were not supposed to cross the line. If you violated this and talked to a girl beyond just greeting her good morning or good afternoon, you would be cited for a prolonged conversation with the opposite sex and be sent to the prefect of discipline. Of course, that did not scare me. I did what I wanted to do. There was also the famous index of forbidden books. I had a friend in the library and he used to have these books.

PADERANGA: Including the *Noli Me Tangere* of course?

TATAD: No, we read *Noli Me Tangere*.

KATAYAMA: When you drafted speeches for the senators and congressman, which portion did you find attractive then? Historical analysis? Or rhetoric...

TATAD: ... I still had the *neo paradosis* speeches to read. You know speeches in Congress did not matter that much then as now. Except for the real intellectuals in the Senate who spoke about very serious issues; on a day to day basis, the congressmen just had to be seen delivering their speech so they could report to their constituencies, that they said something...

KATAYAMA: But when did you get that sense of politics? How did you develop the capacity to analyze issues?

TATAD: It is not easy to answer. You really do not know what will happen to you. It just happens. I was in the university; I started writing as I said. On my second year, we wrote a short story for a class, which I sent to the *Asia* magazine and got published. I got my first real money from something I had written. That was 150 US dollars from Hong Kong. I was in the second year and I had a story published in an international news magazine. Something was happening. Nobody got paid for something like that, unless you were a professional, which I was not. I was a student.

PADERANGA: Your interest in writing started when you were in UST (University of Santo Tomas)?

TATAD: Yes.

KATAYAMA: Did you have any role model during that time to contribute to your output?

TATAD: None in the area of politics or journalism. I guess in the area of religion.

PADERANGA: Who was your role model during that time?

TATAD: None. <laughs>

KATAYAMA: But you were exceptional in doing that, writing articles.

TATAD: The College of Arts and Letters in [the University of] Sto. Tomas was reputed to have produced all the best writers in the country like Teodoro Valencia, Jose Guevarra; all the known top journalists came from Santo Tomas.

PADERANGA: Nick Joaquin?

TATAD: Nick Joaquin's education I think was interrupted. He was in Hong Kong. [Jose] Rizal went to the University of Santo Tomas but also went to Ateneo de Manila [University]. Writing still offered some attraction at that time. I mean it was still considered a profession.

Now, when you tell people you write, they ask “And then what else do you do?” <laughs> So when you write a book, they would ask you, “What else do you do?”

KATAYAMA: You still continued to write speeches for senators and congressmen, so how did you get acquainted with [Ferdinand] Marcos?

TATAD: With Mr. [Ferdinand] Marcos, he was already president. I did not know him personally as a congressman or senator or even as president. My distance from Marcos was rather far. The only recollection I had of him was in the House of Representatives when I was working there already. He was on the floor while Congressman [Vicente] Peralta from Sorsogon was presiding. [Ferdinand] Marcos was reputed to be brilliant. Peralta was also bright. When I entered the session hall, I saw Peralta ruling out Marcos on the floor. Someone very bright was ruled out by someone from my place. Then, Marcos became President, people who worked for him, were rather distinguished craftsmen: Blas Ople, [Juan “Johnny”] Gatbonton, Rony V. Diaz, Adrian Cristobal. I did not know them. I had their names but I did not really know them. But when I moved to the *Bulletin Today*, as I said, I started working for the Agence France[...] Press as a correspondent for three years before I moved to the *Bulletin Today* as a diplomatic reporter and columnist. In 1969, or late 1968, I wrote a column which attracted Marcos’ attention. At that time, General [Hans Menzi] who was also the presidential aide of Marcos was my publisher in the *Bulletin*. At that time, Ninoy [Benigno] Aquino Jr. was attacking the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) which was being built by Marcos in cooperation with Imelda [Romualdez Marcos] as chair. The attacks were going on for days when I wrote a column where I said Imelda... Marcos had done something for the arts that nobody else had done and I think this was good. Ninoy Aquino was asking these questions about the corporate personality of the center and his questions needed to be answered so it was a balance piece. That day, I got a very long telegram from Ninoy Aquino who was in Davao that time, thanking me for the column, congratulating me for the insights etc. The next afternoon, I was working on my report; Menzi came in and said “The president would like to have you for breakfast tomorrow morning.” “No come on General!” “No I am not kidding. He wants to meet you at 9 in the morning.” A reporter having breakfast with the President, that was absurd! Anyway, the next morning I was there before 9 am. At 8:30 am, I was already waiting. 9:15 nothing, 9:30, quarter to ten, there was nothing. So I banged on the door. You <to Dr. Paderanga> are familiar with the layout?

PADERANGA: The office in Malacañang?

TATAD: Yes. I was the only person there. I banged on the door and from inside the junior aide said, “What is it?” “Tell them that I am Francisco Tatad from the *Bulletin Today*, I have a 9:00 a.m. appointment with the president. If he is not ready to receive me, I am a working newspaperman, I have a beat to cover. I have to go.” Of course, it took me years to realize that you do not do that. Anyway, in less than one second I was inside. [President Ferdinand] Marcos was presiding a big meeting in his office. So he took me in the inner sanctum, the private room and there we were, I was sitting in front of the low level table. My publisher, his presidential adviser was standing behind. I was talking about Ninoy [Benigno Aquino Jr.] to the President. Ninoy called me [days ago] and said that “I hope you do not mind the headline in the *Manila Times*.” During that time the headline in the *Bulletin Today* was, ‘Ninoy hits Imelda’s center.’” The play of words, “...but the story is irresistible so I hope you do not mind.” [Ninoy said to me]

[So when I was talking to President Marcos about Ninoy, he said,] “If you need anything, clarify it with me. Call me directly.” [I said] “With all due respect Mr. President, that is not done.” [Marcos said,] “What does it mean that it is not done? Then I would call you.” “Sir, that too is not done.” [I said.] “So, what do we do?” [Marcos asked.] “When I have anything to clarify then I’ll call your Press Secretary and I would get it from him... If you need to clarify more, perhaps you could hold press conferences and we could ask you more questions.” Marcos was nodding like that.

So that was my first meeting with the President [Ferdinand Marcos] and then I did not hear from him again. Until six months later... I was at the MOPC [Manila Overseas Press Club] ... after the French Embassy reception. There was a delegation that came to me, Eduardo “Kokoy” Romualdez, Munding Reyes, Jojo Vara. “Would you come with us? Some people would want to talk to you.” So we went to a private subdivision, Alta Vista, the residence of Father Consec. I met Imelda [Marcos] and the Blue Ladies there and then she mentioned the job for the first time. An hour later, the President came and he repeated the offer. I said that I had to discuss it with my family.

KATAYAMA: I would like to ask about your AFP [Agence France Presse] days. How did they recruit you in AFP?

TATAD: Well, I had a friend who was working with the AFP (Agence France-Presse). There was a classmate... He has retired from the AFP and now works with the *Inquirer* as a senior desk man. He asked me if I was interested to work for the AFP.

KATAYAMA: That was after you graduated from UST?

TATAD: No, before. Before I was thrown out of school... I only became the most outstanding alumnus of Sto Tomas, they never...

KATAYAMA: Which year was that?

TATAD: 1963.

KATAYAMA: How did you find AFP (Agence France-Presse)?

TATAD: Well it was a real learning experience. I found out the difference between service reporting and newspaper reporting. You really have to work hard, every minute counts. If you are covering a story, several service reporters are after the same story. You are all competitors. Everything happens in a matter of minutes. We beat the competition by the minute. So speed and accuracy are important.

KATAYAMA: Was that common in those days, the competition?

TATAD: Yes. Up to now, it is like this, as far as the wires are concerned. So for instance, you are covering a story in a certain place and there is only one telephone, the first man who gets to the telephone gets his story published. Otherwise, there would be fights. Now if you are sitting in the desk, you have to do is to read all the garbled pieces coming out of the telephone prompter... But look at how technology improved these days... You have your own cellphones.

KATAYAMA: So you were very comfortable in AFP (Agence France-Presse)??

TATAD: Yes.

PADERANGA: How long were you in AFP (Agence France-Presse)?

TATAD: Three years but there were also disadvantages. For instance, I had one very memorable story. In the Vietnam Allied Summit in Manila, [President Ferdinand] Marcos, US President Lyndon Johnson, US Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, and the others were there. Johnson was bullying everybody. I got the inside story. I wrote the story. There were two distinguished journalists, one from Washington, the other one was a French man by the name of Francis Lara, a very distinguished journalist, the other one was journalist, and the other was from Saigon –that name was known to many journalists. He is very good friend of Oriana Fallaci. I wrote the story. These two guys read the story and said that it was a very explosive topic. They said, “We cannot run this because we are from AFP and they would suspect that the French sabotaged it... And besides this young guy [pertaining to me], can you take his word for it?” I was a newcomer. Well they released my story. I gave it to a friend in the newspaper who ran the story and made a name for himself. We do not have to mention the name.

KATAYAMA: And after three years...

TATAD: I went to the *Bulletin Today*.

KATAYAMA: How? Did they invite you?

TATAD: We were covering the diplomatic beat because the diplomatic reporter of the *Bulletin*, Oscar Villadolid decided to move to San Miguel Corporation so there was a vacancy. The one pinch hitting was Tony [Antonio] Zumel. He was one of the secondary sponsors in my wedding. So Tony asked me if I was willing to move to the *Bulletin* and if I was willing to replace Oscar [Villadolid]. The editor of the *Bulletin* was saying, in the name of Felix Gonzales, they called him judge. He was self-educated but he was the toughest editor in town. [There were veteran reporters in the *Bulletin* during that time.] They looked over

their shoulders while they wrote their copy... At that time, the newspaper copy was in newsprint. It was as long as from here to there, you staple these things... and this editor would go over the copy, edit, and put it in the bulletin board, "How not to write a story." That was how tough this guy was.

The next morning I was there to see this editor. I was on the other side of the room. Tony Zumel assisted me. He went to the other side and then afterwards he came back. "Bong [pertaining to me], *tapos na* [it's done]." "I did not do anything." "He asked me one question." "What question?" "*Nagdidilehensya ba yan?*" [Does he make money?] "No." "Then he is in." That was how I came into the *Bulletin*.

KATAYAMA: That was in 1966? Before [President Ferdinand] Marcos was elected.

PADERANGA: And then you became the Press Secretary in 1969.

KATAYAMA: May I know how much were you compensated in AFP (Agence France-Presse) and in the *Bulletin*?

TATAD: I think in those days, the salary scale was very low. PhP 200 a month.

KATAYAMA: Almost along the normal rates.

TATAD: Yes. I had overnight compensation etc. I had one big fight with my boss in AFP (Agence France Presse) at that time. I was covering the Laurey-Langley Agreement and the talks in Baguio. When I came down from Baguio, I asked about my per diem, my meal allowances. He told me, "So that means you did not buy your meal in Baguio?" I thought that was offensive. I do not allow people to buy my meal. I sometimes buy others people's meal even though I was merely a newspaperman. For instance, at that time, we paid for the coffee of the spokesman, not the other way around. As a newspaper reporter, I got the story from you, you are an official, therefore, I owe you a debt of gratitude. I owe you something. It is different today. When I get the story from you, I use it, and you owe me something. It is now the other way around. It is an inversion of values.

KATAYAMA: So when did you marry?

TATAD: I got married one year after I entered the Cabinet.

KATAYAMA: ... So 1969..

TATAD: I got married 1970. We'd be celebrating our 40th year in August 2010.

TADEM: Where did you meet your wife?

TATAD: We were neighbors in Project 3, Homesite. Homesite is composed of Projects 2, 3 and 4. We were in project 3. I lived in that street. My wife was in Agoho. One day I saw this luminous girl in the post office. My wife is a beautiful woman. You have seen her? <to Prof. Katayama> She is extraordinary. She was sitting next to me in the post office. I was there when I first saw her. But I did not know her then. When I came home, I told my sisters "I am going to marry that girl." I never spoke to her until years later.

PADERANGA: You never took your eyes off her?

TATAD: I played the field as a bachelor but yeah... I could not explain why I was saying that I would marry her, which I did... so many years after.

TADEM: How many children do you have?

TATAD: I have seven, two boys and five girls.

KATAYAMA: We are very much interested on your first impression of [President Ferdinand] Marcos? Aside from that moment you saw him in the Batasan Hall and when you talked to him in person in Malacañang, what did you think of him?

TATAD: Here is the guy in control.

PADERANGA: So after that meeting... that was when he [Marcos] asked you to be Press Secretary? Who was his Press Secretary that time?

TATAD: Jose Aspiras was the Press Secretary during that time but he was going to run for Congress that was why they needed a replacement.

KATAYAMA: What did you think when you were offered that position because you were a journalist and you were entering politics, it meant something, right?

TATAD: ... It was a little bit complicated because after the offer was made, I discussed it with my publisher... And I completely forgot about it. I went back to my job because at AFP (Agence France-Presse), I was enjoying my job. I completely forgot about it but there was this conversation about the Press Secretaryship. And then after a week, I got a call from my editor at 3:00 in the afternoon, "Can you come to the office now? We have to talk." I found that unusual because it was not the SOP (Standard Operating Procedure). The SOP was to call the office at 4 or 5 in the afternoon to tell them the story you were writing. There was no fax machine or email so we wrote our story in the office. By that time, the editor should know so that he could allocate space for your story in the newspaper. I never had prior experience of going straight to the editor even before I got the story. When I arrived in the office, my publisher said, "Did you read Mr. [Jose] Gueverra this morning?" "Sir, I do not read Mr. Guevarra." "Okay read it." The article said there were lots of speculations who the next Press Secretary would be: Nani [Hernando] Perez, who was editor of the *Daily Express*, Adrian Cristobal, Jacobo Clave, Juan Tuvera, Jean Marshall, and all the other names mentioned, but none of these would be press secretary. It would be going to this young editor. [The publisher asked me.] "So why did you not tell us?" [I replied.] "The offer was made but I told the President that I would talk to you and he said he would talk to you instead." [He asked again.] "So now that it is out, what is your decision?" [I said,] "Sir, I have not made my decision; I have not thought about it." [He instructed me.] "Okay, go and see Mr. Teodoro Valencia tomorrow morning." [I asked again.] "What do I do then?" [My publisher answered,] "Ask for his advice." [I said,] "I do not know Mr. Valencia and he does not know me." And then Menzi said "just go there and tell him I sent you."

So I went to Mr. [Teodoro] Valencia the next morning who was holding court at Plaza Ferguzon... Before he went to Intercontinental Hotel for Club 365, [I approached him and said,] “Mr. Valencia, *ako po si Tatad* from *Bulletin*. *Pinadala po ako ni General Menzi(?)*.” [I was sent by General Hans Menzi.] “*O bakit bata?*” [What is it kid?] “*Kasi po yung trabaho po ni Jose Aspiras sa Malacañang ay binibigay sa akin.*” [They are giving me the job of Aspiras in Malacañang.] “*Ikaw? Bakit ikaw?*” [You? Why you?] Anyway, he said that if I did not take it, they would offer it again five years from now, ten years from now... “Just try to write your columns the way I write mine,” Valencia said. I said to myself that if that is going to be my future [in writing], there would be no future for me. I do not have a very high regard for [Valencia’s writing]; his writings are not think pieces, but *tsismis* [gossip] type of news. “Okay thank you Mr. Valencia.”

So I went back to my publisher and said “I just spoke to Mr. Valencia.” “Have you made your decision?,” he asked. “No, not yet sir. I do not know, I have not made up my mind yet,” I replied. “Okay sleep on it but right now stop writing your column,” he said. “And why should I stop writing my column?,” I asked. “Because you have been compromised,” he answered. “In what way have I been compromised? Am I praising Marcos in my columns? I am not!,” I protested. “But it is known all over town you have been offered the position,” my publisher answered. “Yes, but I have not accepted it and that is the important thing,” I said. “No, no. Stop writing and that is final,” he said. This was Felix Gonzales. “That is an unfair decision sir; I hope you will reconsider.” “No, it’s final.” “So in that case sir, thank you. Thank you for having me in the *Bulletin*. I am resigning from the *Bulletin* and good bye.”

I called Governor [Benjamin “Kokoy”] Romualdez [Jr.], “Governor, I want to inform you that I resigned from the *Bulletin*.” “*Bakit ka nagresign? Yung appointment mo ino oppose ng mga Ilocano.*” (Why did you resign? The Ilocanos are opposing your appointment). The Ilocanos were against my appointment because they said the President did not know me and I did not know the President. It was a very valid reason. I said, “Okay, you know the job was offered to me by the President and the First Lady, these are very honorable people. If the offer still exists, I am now ready to take it, if it is no longer available, *wala tayong pinagusapan* (Then there is nothing to be discussed).” “*Bakit ganyan? Hindi pwedeng ganyan!*” (Why does it have to be this way? It can’t be that way.) Expletives.

PADERANGA: This is Kokoy {Benjamin Romualdez}? He was already Governor during that time?

TATAD: Governor of Leyte. *Siya ang paktotong...* “This cannot be. Come here and we will discuss things.” After a couple of weeks, August 16, 1969, I was sworn in and I had a one sentence of instruction from [President Ferdinand] Marcos. “I will depend on you.” And for ten years, I ran his office. I was Propaganda Officer and did not receive any instruction on a day-to-day basis. I also wrote some of his speeches.

KATAYAMA: But everyday you met him?

TATAD: Yes, to see what was happening and then to tell the Press corps about it. It was his working habit; he would end at about 2:00 in the afternoon. He would eat porridge or congee. And then at 4:00 [in the afternoon], he would be on the other side of the Pasig River to play pelota or golf and I would tell him, this was what you said, this was what I said.

TADEM: How about Imelda Marcos? Did you deal with her?

TATAD: There was no other way of avoiding her. I thought I was the only who could get out of meetings. Because the minute she started at 9:00, it would end, the next morning. It was not easy for people to get out and leave. I always knew who the president was and who was not and what powers were completely incidental to the presidency. We were quite close. I was the Niño Bonito because I was the youngest. The first problem I had with her was when she first decided to go to Australia. I wrote a memo to the president saying that the Australian press had not been very kind to him. I said that if this was not a serious international commitment, I hope she would reconsider booking her trip for another time. However, if it could not be avoided, I hope the visit would be a low profile visit. No planes standing... no highly visible parties. So I sent the memo to the President. The President was talking to his wife; he gave her my memo. The next day I have an emissary from her. “*O! Tatad kay Marcos ka na pala. Hindi ka na pala kay ma’am.*” [Tatad, so you are now Marcos’ man? You are no longer ma’am’s?] <laughs> So I said, “we only have one president. If you make him succeed, we would succeed”...

PADERANGA: This was before martial law?

TATAD: I do not know. After, I think.

PADERANGA: Many years after?

TATAD: And of course the most critical was the Ms. Universe Pageant. At that time, I was the Information Secretary; I became Minister when the Batasan was convened. I gave myself the prerogative to recommend to the media, not to order, just to recommend how stories should be treated. There was this Ms. Universe Pageant here. Each contestant who arrived would be photographed in her bathing suit. The photographs would be on the front page and the fold of the newspaper. I thought this was going to trivialize the reforms of the New Society. So I sent a memo to the editors, "Please print these bathing suit pictures inside or at the back page or at the very least below the fold. Not the main story." I thought it was a reasonable request. But the papers of course liked the cheese and what happened was Secretary Joe Aspiras who was the Secretary of Tourism intercepted the memo to [President Ferdinand] Marcos. He said, "This is going to kill our tourism. Mr. President, over rule the margins he wrote and disregard the memo." Joe, feeling victorious... posted this memo on the bulletin board for the international media to see. The next thing that happened was that the *Washington Post* carried a very big article saying that the Philippine government had gone crazy about the Pageant and there was only one sensible man and this was Tatad." Madam received this news and read it to the President. She was in tears. I learned about it and immediately went to the President. "Mr. President, I heard that the First Lady was here complaining about the Ms. Universe fiasco." The President asked "What is the story here?" "My decision about the matter was that we could hold the Ms. Universe Pageant everyday if we liked, but it should not be a national activity of the Philippine government. This should not be our project because it is going to trivialize your program of government. Should you not believe I am right, I am willing to be told I am wrong. But if I am going to be fired, I hope it will be by this Mr. President and not by anyone else." [President Ferdinand] Marcos said, "Who is talking of firing anyone? You go back to your office."

TADEM: When you joined the Marcos administration, what were your initial expectations in terms of how things would run?

TATAD: Well, I had to learn everything. [President Ferdinand] Marcos did not know any better by appointing me and I did not know any better by expecting. That was learning a process, but as I said I ran the Information Program of the government for ten years not having anyone to tell me how.

TADEM: Was it easy for you to see [President Ferdinand] Marcos anytime until the end?

TATAD: Yes, because I did not have anything to take up with him. I did not have a piece of paper to let him sign because I needed a contract or whatsoever.

PADERANGA: You saw him everyday?

TATAD: Yes. In the oddest hours, he would call me. He knew that the first call was important for him not for me.

TADEM: Could you recall any instances that you wanted to see him but you were not able to or the other way around?

TATAD: No. There was just this one time that I recall, his mind seemed so far away. He was going to Camp Aguinaldo and I was already in his car. I was briefing him but he was not listening. I think he was occupied with something more important. Before we got to Camp Aguinaldo, he turned to me and said, "I am sorry, you were telling me something earlier? What did you say?"

PADERANGA: I have a question on that, when you were writing your column in *Bulletin*, you were writing as Kit Tatad? When was the first time you used that?

TATAD: No, I was signing it as Francisco Tatad but Kit became my nickname when I was in Manila. Francisco is from the Spanish name Paco, the small Paco is Pacito. When I got to Manila, my friends called me Kit.

PADERANGA: But what were you called in Gigmoto?

TATAD: Pacito.

PADERANGA: I have another question, is it possible to get from you some sense of who was mainly the back staff in the writing of the 13 documents coming out of the New Society? For example, I have a book in the house...

TATAD: *Today's Revolution: Democracy?*

PADERANGA: Did it come from your office?

TATAD: No, not from my office. Marcos 1 [his first term], I was not yet there. Marcos 2 [second term] was when I came in. I took charge of all the speech writing, speaking for the President, and the issuance of statements for him. I was also in-charge of all the speeches but the books, at one point, I told [President Ferdinand] Marcos, we have to consider putting together certain series of books and I said probably Adrian [Cristobal] could take charge of this project. So Adrian Cristobal was mainly responsible for *Today's Revolution: Democracy*. There were some history projects where Johnny [Juan] Tuvera got involved and... a group from the University of the Philippines.

PADERANGA: But that is the question that we would come back to, I hope you do not mind.

TATAD: No problem. *Si Adrian yun* [It was Adrian]. In fact, there was one story related to that... I heard about a well known university professor from UP (University of the Philippines), Zeus Salazar. I did not know who Zeus was that time. In fact I only met him recently. He is Bicolano but I had already heard of his reputation. He was the professor from History who was invited by the military. I asked "What happened? Why?" Because he had some negative or critical remarks on some portions of Marcos' book. There was a portion where it says the French had a penchant for beheading their monarch. According to the story I heard, Zeus was saying that the French beheaded one monarch and [President Ferdinand] Marcos' book was already calling it penchant. He reportedly said to his students, "Don't read this book, just go to the movies." I told Marcos about the story, "A professor had been invited by the military because of this." I told him the story then asked, "So what do you think Mr.

President?” “If you are going to be known as the author of a serious book, you should be prepared for serious criticisms. You cannot afford jailing people for criticizing your book.” The next day, I heard Marcos ordered the release of Zeus.

PADERANGA: You know we should make a list of these media men; it is of interest especially to Katayama sensei.

TADEM: When you joined the government, did you have any particular perspective on how it should be run?

TATAD: We must remember that when I joined the government, it was on the eve of the presidential election. The focus was on how to support a presidential reelection because all the re-electionists lost. In our history, no one was reelected for the presidency. Some died during their term. The focus was on how to help Marcos as a [re-electionist] candidate. I was the propaganda person in that campaign.

TADEM: But you had no working experience on elections?

TATAD: The national election yes, but I had some minor involvement in provincial elections but nothing to do with ideas. I was just asking people to vote for [Ferdinand] Marcos.

PADERANGA: Can I just ask you some uncomfortable questions?

TATAD: No problem.

PADERANGA: That was the first time I noted that there were some vicious propaganda during that time.

TATAD: Against [President Ferdinand] Marcos?

PADERANGA: No, against [Sergio] Osmeña. You did not engage in any campaign using dirty tricks?

TATAD: Nobody is in control of anyone in any campaign.

PADERANGA: There were allegations that we had sold some irons to the Japanese and that Osmeña collaborated with them... [There were] very funny caricatures of Osmeña with his big head... TATAD: I never saw these but you can probably think of any other people...

KATAYAMA: Everybody guessed that [President Ferdinand] Marcos would win but why did Marcos throw that massive amount of money to be assured of this victory? I am very curious why Marcos was very careful... When you joined the Marcos camps, were you assured he would win?

TATAD: No, there was no assurance he would win. He was certainly stronger than his challengers. If you read the work of this Japanese scholar, *Presidential Bandwagons*, it talks about the incumbent as being always the stronger candidate. During that time, [Ferdinand] Marcos was able to build many infrastructures.

PADERANGA: So the infrastructures were already built during that time?

TATAD: Yes. Why did he have to do that? Because he was a *segurista*; he took no chances. For instance, in 1980, I ran Alejo Santos against him. I was the one who fielded that candidate because no one wanted to run against him. Doy [Salvador] Laurel and company were saying that if we do not have a candidate, [President Ferdinand] Marcos would resign... It was stupid, so I produced a candidate. I left the cabinet already and I was the Secretary-General of the Nacionalista Party. The only guy that everyone did not want to get involved in any fight against Marcos was Alejo [Santos]. I delivered a speech to him and his wife while they were having breakfast at his residence and he cried and said "Okay, we accept the challenge of Kit Tatad." <,laughs But in that campaign, Marcos would not risk anything. In that campaign, they cut off the electricity in our meetings in Cebu and Bacolod. And Alejo was down the stage challenging Marcos to a fist fight. In Bacolod, the whole town was illuminated except the plaza where we were having our meeting.

PADERANGA: And you were accompanying Alejo Santos?

TATAD: I was the campaign manager.

<Everybody laughs.>

TATAD: The Santos family said they would only accept the challenge if I were the campaign manager.

PADERANGA: You were already on the bad side of [Ferdinand] Marcos during that time?

TATAD: Yes. I resigned. Remember, I was the only one who resigned from his cabinet but of course I was still in the Batasan because I was elected in 1978.

TADEM: What year was this?

TATAD: 1980.

PADERANGA: What was the trigger for it?

TATAD: It was political. We have to go back to this long story... I wanted [President Ferdinand] Marcos to call an election as early as 1975. I was proposing for him to call an election to renew his mandate legally. He said, "No need. I am very popular." And finally in 1978, he decided to call the Batasang Pambansa. So he called me, "Okay! I am going to call for elections in 1978. I want you to run as an Assemblyman in Bicol." "Mr. President with all due respect, I am not suitable for any elective position because I do not laugh at jokes that are not funny. I do not pat the backs of people. I am *suplado*." I knew my virtue defects. "This will be the first election of the New Society and you are the spokesman of the New Society. You have to be part of it." "Okay if you insist. I'll see what I can do." My first problem was I am Bicolano but the Bicolanos did not know I am one because I grew up in the city. When I was appointed with the Bicol block, they wanted to see Marcos. "If you are appointing a Bicolano cabinet member," they said it had to be me. Marcos replied, "I did not even know Tatad was Bicolano. I am appointing him because I am confident of his ability to do this thing." I had to go to Bicol to introduce myself to the people and to ask for help. But at the onset Marcos called the Bicolano leaders to ask them, "I am asking Kit to run, do you think

this is a good idea?" They said, "It is very good!" I went down and introduced myself. After a month, I ran a survey to find out if the Bicolanos already knew I was from Bicol. In the familiarity ratings, I was already number three. The topnotcher was Bicolano broadcaster Eddie Alanis followed by Eddie Ilarde. I was third. So with the survey, I got back to Malacañang. On that day, the Bicolano leaders were in the Palace, "Mr. President, we think that you should reconsider your decision about Kit because people do not know him." "What are you talking about? He is number three and you are way down." They simply did not want me. On the final day that Marcos was going to announce the candidates, these Bicolanos came back and said, "Mr. President, for the national elections, leave Kit here in Manila to run the overall propaganda but you should not let him run in Bicol." "I think they are right Kit, I think you should stay here in Manila." "Mr. President, do you remember that I was against running for an elective post right from the start, but you told me to run? I have talked to so many people and asked for their help. They have pledged their support for me but if you say I should not, I am not going to run anymore. But I will also resign from my position because my word would mean nothing to anybody anymore. [The people will say,] "He is a kid, do not listen to him. His words mean nothing." Marcos said, "In that case, run." That settled the problem but in that regional electoral campaign, there were 12 candidates. I was still in the cabinet, but then these 12 candidates banded together to campaign against me. They were offering a reward of PHP5,000 for precincts where I would get a zero vote. The other guy, the number 12, Marcel Pimentel from Camarines Norte also suffered because he became very close to me. The two of us were being junked. What happened was all the opposition candidates carried me and in the elections in my province, the smallest province, [I got] five percent of the votes. Our campaign manager was the governor whose brother was one of the candidates in Catanduanes; he was campaigning for his brother but not for me. I spent half a day campaigning in the province. Bicol is big. In the end, people in Catanduanes voted for me alone. And [that was] the biggest majority ever registered. They [the people] were offended by this effort to head out one Catanduanon out of two. There were 12 slots to be filled and the governor wanted only one name to be there, the name of his brother. I was running for the first time and had not committed any sin against anyone. *So ayun, baliktad [yung naging result ng eleksyon], Ako [yung nanalo.]*(So the opposite thing happened. I won instead.)

After that, there was a local election. I wanted to present local candidates. I submitted names to [Ferdinand] Marcos. “No, no. We have to have the Albertos,” the president said. “Mr. President, in the last campaign, I got all the votes in Catanduanes, only because they did not like what these guys were doing. I cannot go there now and say here are our candidates. I will loose face. If you cannot support my candidates, pick somebody in the middle and we will support them,” I said. “No,” he said. “In that case, I give up my post,” I said. I went to Bicol. [President Ferdinand] Marcos followed and Imelda [Marcos] and several actors, Nora Aunor, Rico J. Puno, etc. When they got to Legazpi, Albay, Rico Puno emceed the program. He would say, “*mabuhay ang KBL [Kilusang Bagong Lipunan], 1,2,3*” (Long live KBL, 1,2,3) and then the people would reply “4,5,6.” It was the same in Naga. *Kung hindi kayo sumigaw ng “Mabuhay KBL, hindi niyo mapapakinggan si Nora Aunor.” Hindi nila napakinggan si* [They were not able to hear] Nora Aunor and the political leaders there decided that these things happened because of Tatad. So they sent for me. They had the helicopter in Catanduanes pick me up and when I saw the KBL people there, “Tell them that I am out in the...” [President Ferdinand] Marcos went to Manila. I told my people, “If Marcos was the same Marcos that I knew, he will wait until the elections before he gets back at me but if he is so angry, he’ll get back at me the minute he arrives in Manila.” As soon as he got to Manila, May 17, which was the anniversary of the Marcos Constitution, the speech that I usually wrote, was now about me, accusing me of every crime in the book.

PADERANGA: They must have been written by the ...

TATAD: There were so many writers there. When I got back to Malacañang, I held a press conference to answer the President point by point, but at that time, my office had already been taken over. So I went back to see Marcos, “Look Mr. President, I heard your speech. I just gave a press conference where I tried to refute some of your statements. I regret that you accused me of every crime except insanity and treason. If I have been guilty of any of these, why have I not heard about these in the ten years I worked for you?” Marcos said. “Kits, this is politics.” And he shook my hand.

PADERANGA: He did not take it personally.

TATAD: He was really a master player.

PADERANGA: So you separated in good terms actually?

TATAD: Yes. I never took it personally. For instance I was invited to speak in New York for the Asian Society. When I came back, the guys here were so disappointed that I did not lambast Marcos. That was not my style... you do not wash the [dirty linens]... you discuss issues, personalities.

TADEM: What was the clout of the Albertos? Were they a dynasty already?

TATAD: A dynasty. They were part of the “Eighth Zero Club.”

TADEM: They are also living in La Vista.

TATAD: *No, wala na sila* [No, they are no longer there].

PADERANGA: *Hindi na sila* active sa politics [They are no longer active in politics]. That was a big family.

TATAD: The last of them was a mayor.

KATAYAMA: May I go back to the past years, just before the declaration of martial law. We are interested on how Marcos planned martial law. Did you have any idea or information about that?

TATAD: The planning was strictly compartmentalized.... There was of course academic discussion on how you deal with insurgency. You would occasionally be drowned in the discussions. He used to give references to constitutional egalitarianism but the actual planning never surfaced. In one event, [Amado] Doronila, a very good friend who was the best man in my wedding, wrote a piece saying that the Palace was engaged in getting all sorts of information about how martial law was conducted in all countries in preparation for martial law. This was a big story in the *Mirror*. Marcos told me to rebut the story and I did so with the condition that this was completely speculative. So after that, I was no longer

informed of things that were going on. I was told in broad strokes about martial law days before its enactment. Marcos put his arms around me and said, "Don't leave the town for the next few days because we have to do some things that will require your full cooperation."

KATAYAMA: You are the one of the few cabinet members who were informed about that. Even Cesar Virata did not know...

TADEM: Do you believe that? That Cesar [Virata] did not know about it?

TATAD: Yes. I only knew about it only three or four days before.

KATAYAMA: Mr. [President Ferdinand] Marcos asked you to stay during that time?

TATAD: Yes. It turned out that I would be the one to read the proclamation.

KATAYAMA: So you already noticed that it would already be martial law?

TATAD: I did not speculate. I just waited to be called, but the day before, I went to the Palace. [Ferdinand] Marcos was alone and watching a movie and I was trying to sit with him to watch the movie. His telephone rang, and there was nobody else to take the call. There was nobody in the official circle to take the call, so I took it and it was Juan Ponce Enrile. He talked to me about his ambush, which years later turned out to be bogus, staged. That's all.

KATAYAMA: What kind of movie was Marcos watching?

TATAD: I could not recall now. All these movie houses tried to give the Palace an advance copy of the movies.

KATAYAMA: So [Ferdinand] Marcos enjoyed watching movies?

TATAD: Probably there was nothing much to do to relax.

TADEM: What do you feel about your friends like [Amado] Doronila who were arrested during that time? Tony [Antonio Zumel]... you were very good friends but they were against Marcos.

TATAD: It was the function of martial law to immobilize dissent. The newspapers and all the media were closed down, remember, as part of the martial law. What I did was to arrange for the immediate release of my friends from the media. But this did not come so quickly. I had to guarantee, for instance, for Doro [Amado Doronila] to be allowed to leave for Australia.

KATAYAMA: May we know your [own view]... on the necessity of the declaration of martial law?

TATAD: At that time?

KATAYAMA: Yes and... now when you look back at it. My question is how did you find martial law during that time?

TATAD: I had no basis for disputing the necessity during that time because the rebellion was real, the threat was real, and the region itself was suffering from a very serious threat. The reigning political theory during that time was the Falling Dominoes Theory— one domino falls, and the next pieces will fall. People actually bought this. And so it was crazy to take the risk and if you look at how Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo responds to the tiniest sign of dissent, you will begin to ask why [President Ferdinand] Marcos allowed the CPP-NPA [Communist Party of the Philippines - New People's Army] to be marching everyday on Laurel's street saying "*Mabuhay si Dante, patay na si Marcos!*" And there were various incidents of course. For me, there was no basis to dispute the necessity. Of course, there was a fake ambush but that was probably meant for the purposes of the guys involved there. They wanted to raise their importance in the scheme of things.

KATAYAMA: But the main reason for the declaration of martial law was peace and order, security, and not really the construction of the New Society?

TATAD: Perhaps that was an unintended consequence of the State. I think this phrase came up in the speech that was read. The original intention was simply to declare martial law, to let me read the text without [President Ferdinand] Marcos saying anything. The original intention of its planners was to bring me in to read the proclamation. I was not part of the planners. We were setting up the audiovisual when Imelda [Marcos] came in and said that there was something terrible about the set up. If the people did not see Marcos, alive and well, there would be terrible speculations. She was right but there was no prepared speech. I had to write the speech right there and then. They brought in a typewriter and I wrote the announcement there. So the quality of the speech was not that good because I did not have the chance to read what I wrote. The phrase "New Society" was there. The declaration was taken by Singapore as something that was against rebellion and for the New Society. That became the main line, serendipity.

<Dr. Paderanga asks to be excused from the interview for another appointment.>

TATAD: Just to complete the discussion on this particular point, if you look at the provision of the Constitution now [on] martial law and the provision that was invoked in 1971 and 1972... as far as the old Constitution was concerned, the mere threat of insurrection and rebellion was insufficient for the Commander-in-Chief to proclaim martial law. Today it is no longer the case. Imminent threat is gone and the only two grounds are invasion and rebellion when public safety requires it.

KATAYAMA: At that time, you used to refer to a core group that conceptualized the martial law, would you have an idea about this?

TATAD: No. they just kept it...

KATAYAMA: ...compartmentalized.

TATAD: They just did their job very well. No leaks, not even to us. These were professionals.

TADEM: How was the dynamics in the cabinet? Who were the powers that be in that cabinet? Did you see any factions?

TATAD: Factions? I do not think there were factions. There were some articulated points of views. Some cabinet members tended to be more active than others but you cannot say that there were factions. [President Ferdinand] Marcos listened to everyone. He was a very good listener. He made his points, laid them on the table, and then everyone discussed them. The articles we read about an authoritarian figure whose voice was the only one that was heard is a myth; it is completely imaginary. I never participated actively in discussion, what I did was to write my ideas and memos before the Cabinet and show it to Marcos...

KATAYAMA: What is the relationship between you and Adrian Cristobal? You were like the architects of these?

TATAD: I was in-charge of the information infrastructure. Adrian [Cristobal] came in as head of the PCAS (Philippine Center for Advanced Studies). They were in charge of certain book projects. We had no conflict. Although in my case, I did not have my own undersecretary for most of the time. There was a period when I got Ruben Canoy as undersecretary while being mayor of Cagayan de Oro at the same time. He did not want to give up his mayoral post. He also had some problems with other people in the department, so he left. I never had an undersecretary. One time, I had to attend this international conference in India, the President had to name Adrian as the Acting Presidential Spokesman for a few days.

KATAYAMA: What is your perception of Primitivo Mijares?

TATAD: Primitivo "Tibo" Mijares was a journalist. He covered [President Ferdinand] Marcos from his Senate days up to Malacañang. One time, he spoke to me and said that he was being asked to resign by the Lopezes because of his support for Marcos. I communicated this to Marcos. "Your friend informed me that he is going to be sacked if he refused to attack you." "Okay." So I found a job for Mijares in the *Daily Express*. I even negotiated for his salary. He wanted to be in Malacañang as a reporter. He was more active than the other reporters. There were times when he sent some proposed stories for us to release. Marcos

would come to me and ask me where these stories came from and I said these were suggested by Tibo. I could not release these because these had no basis. This was a complete fabrication. You could not go on fabricating these stories.

KATAYAMA: What were these stories?

TATAD: Political... those kinds of things. The president was supposed to do these but did not... No, we would not do it. Not on my watch. [I would say], "If you wanted to release these stories, they should not come from my office."

KATAYAMA: So you did not necessarily trust his credibility?

TATAD: No.

KATAYAMA: How about his famous books?

TATAD: A lot of inventions including the dialogues. I do not know whatever happened to him... I do not want to talk about missing persons or dead persons. But later on, I learned that he was in fact sacked by his employers after many years. They finally learned that in one election, there was another person writing for him while he was in San Francisco, CA gambling and issuing checks that bounced just to embarrass the Lopezes. They wanted to sack him. That was the time he told me he was being sacked because he did not want to attack [President Ferdinand] Marcos. He was not a good person.

KATAYAMA: How about the other technocrats, like Cesar Virata, do you think that those technocrats truly enjoyed the trust of Mr. [Ferdinand] Marcos or just as you mentioned, it became compartmentalized, and different functions were just delegated to people?

TATAD: They enjoyed the trust and confidence of Mr. Marcos but that did not prevent him from creating second walls between them, let's say the military for security or the business cronies. In fairness to Marcos, whatever money he made with his cronies did not infect his Cabinet.

KATAYAMA: So roughly speaking how many groups, not factions were there? The military, the technocrats, the cronies, and Imelda [Marcos]?

TATAD: Imelda [Marcos] and others <laughs>.

TADEM: They would always say, Marcos' technocrats, then Imelda's technocrats.

TATAD: *Wala namang technocrat si Madam eh* [Madam did not have a technocrat], maybe Jolly [Jose Conrado] Benitez. All of us technocrats were professionals who were there to serve and we did it well.

TADEM: Did you have any relationship with them? With [Cesar] Virata?

TATAD: Yes. Professional, up to some extent personal, but... you know in the Department of Information, we centralized the information... Every government agency or department had a public information and assistance unit. What I did was to put all these together in one roof at the ground floor of the administrative building. They were all housed there. All the complaints were coming to them, and were being logged. The only rule was that at the end of the day, there must be a report on what happened to a particular complaint, whether it was resolved or not. There must be a report being fed on the source of the information or the complaint. If it was something that involved all other departments, then that particular office had to talk to these departments and follow up. This became so effective that at one point, people were calling me directly at odd hours--"Secretary Tatad, please help us, *inaaway ako ng asawa ko* [my spouse is quarreling with me]"--to the point of telling me their personal problems. That was how effective it was. All the technocrats had to be serviced by this and they had to contribute their own inputs; that was how we related. I also organized information caravans. We would have people from various departments and a team who was assigned to a certain area had to deliver the services of these agencies, and collect social data from the people. We used the data to feedback the policy-makers. It was how we did things.

TADEM: Did you get conflicting information from people in the Cabinet?

TATAD: That could not be avoided. That always happened.

TADEM: How did you deal with these?

TATAD: You had to verify which one was more credible.

TADEM: Can you recall any especially those on economic policies?

TATAD: Nothing in particular. I can tell you of an anecdote. Gerry [Gerardo] Sicat released one time the CPI (Consumer Price Index)... <laughs> Marcos said, "My wife just went to the market and these figures are all wrong." <laughs> "Do not release these things because these are all important policy matters which should be released by the President."

KATAYAMA: You mentioned that Mr. [Ferdinand] Marcos never gave you detailed instructions but did you get any information or sense that they did not like these articles in newspapers...?

TATAD: These criticisms in the media always reached me. For instance, the United States normally sent stories to us by cable, Telex, long kilometric newspapers. Normally, we would send our replies. By the time these stories got to the Palace, we would also have our replies simultaneously. When I got them, I normally acted on these. When Ninoy Aquino [Benigno Aquino Jr.] wrote a full page in the *Bangkok Post*, the next day there was a full page article written by me in the *Bangkok Post*.

KATAYAMA: You never or seldom contacted editors...

TATAD: To manage the stories? No. There was one time, in the beginning of martial law, they said that I could ask the editors that certain stories be treated in a certain manner. Those were requests, not commands. One time, I noticed that there were so many columns praising [President Ferdinand] Marcos for nothing. There was no sufficient basis for comments like these. I called these incompetent praises. So I asked the newspaper, "Could you suspend the columnists until they learn to be more objective about the government. We do not need all these praises that mean nothing; we should praise things that are good. But when there are

problems, we want them to help us analyze the problems so that solutions could be found.”
All the *sipsips* [suckers] were writing there. All of these columns were suspended.

KATAYAMA: Did you have any regular meetings with the editors?

TATAD: Not really regular, but I had access to them and they had access to me.

KATAYAMA: But just like the Ms. Universe incident, you told them about these, did that kind of event always happen or very rarely?

TATAD: No, only on very important issues, not on an everyday basis because they had certain rules on self regulation. There was no need.

KATAYAMA: How about Mrs. [Imelda] Marcos, how often did she contact you?

TATAD: She had her own press office. Remember? She had Iliana Maramag; she had Marita Manuel, and the others.

TADEM: So that was separate from the formal?

TATAD: Yes because it had different functions all together. I did not want my office to be saddled by [those]...

KATAYAMA: Your wife never joined the Blue Ladies?

TATAD: One time, Mrs. [Imelda] Marcos went to Indonesia. She invited my wife to join the other ladies and then asked me whether it was possible to meet the editors and the publishers of Hong Kong. I went to Hong Kong to organize a meeting between her and the editors and publishers. The editors and publishers offered to host the dinner for her instead of being her guests. We were preparing all these. There would be a dinner [upon the arrival of] Mrs. Marcos in Hong Kong. I was [coordinating] all these details. The assumption was everything was clear because there was no objection from the camp of Mrs. Marcos. When she arrived at the Hong Kong Peninsula, she said that she did not want to go to the place where the editors

were hosting the dinner. She said, “Is it possible to see them here in the hotel after dinner?” I did not know what to tell the people, of course, I had to lie. I told them that Mrs. Marcos had to stay in the hotel because there were many telephone calls, etc. Good enough for the editors. So we crossed to Kowloon and entered the Peninsula. When we got in her suite, I realized she was not there. She was in the ballroom hosting another dinner. I felt so small. I wanted to crawl inside... The editors did not resent it at all. After the dinner, I stayed up for a while in Mandarin on the other side. “Madam, I am going to the hotel with my wife.” “No, no, you go, but your wife stays with me.” “Sorry ma’am, I am the only one working for the Philippine government, my wife does not work for the government and does not work for you. She is my wife. She stays with me.” I was not smiling. Imelda [Marcos] said to my wife, “*O sige na nga* [Oh, ok], go with your husband.”

TADEM: There was no policy from Imelda [Marcos] that you were directed to do or something?

TATAD: No, because as Minister of Information, I was responsible for information within the Cabinet. When she [Imelda Marcos] became the Minister of Human Settlements that was the time I became responsible for information coming from her office. The cabinet acted as one cabinet. It was not one department shooting another. [President Ferdinand] Marcos, at the best of my knowledge, was the only president who knew how to run a cabinet. After Marcos, the others did not know how to run a cabinet. Everyone is doing his own thing. The Cabinet decides and then your department is responsible for the implementation.

KATAYAMA: I am also interested in the intellectual capacity of Mr. Marcos. I am very much interested about your impression of the photographic memory of Marcos... How would you assess his intellectual capacity?

TATAD: Superior brain. When you go back for instance to the records of the Senate, you see the debates between [President Ferdinand] Marcos and Arturo Tolentino, they really had sharp mindss. And as president, I have watched him perform with Lee Kuan Yew. I have the highest respects for Lee Kuan Yew, but I think there was only one person that Lee Kuan Yew respected and that was Marcos.

KATAYAMA: You mentioned that [President Ferdinand] Marcos was a good listener, he listened to everyone but do you think that Marcos totally understood what he was listening to?

TATAD: ... As far as I am concerned, I think he understood but since economics is highly specialized, I guess it is the economists who could tell you if he fully grasped the ideas. But he would understand the fundamentals intellectually. But the jargons would be something else... He had the capacity to understand technical ideas...His view of the world, his grasp for things, the fundamentals, the strategic concerns, they were all forward looking. For instance, we had two oil crises in the 1970s. These did not come in as shocks because Marcos was ahead in planning; we had an energy program and the Department of Energy. Marcos was also able to contact oil producing countries, not only because of the problems with Mindanao but also because of the need for oil. Having mentioned Lee Kuan Yew, Lew Kuan Yew was far ahead than us as far as information technology was concerned. We had very little appreciation of that at that time and there were times Lee Kuan Yew would come and would have small dinner in Pangarap with us—Lee Kuan Yew, his wife, Imelda, Marcos, myself, and my wife, the six of us. Lee Kuan Yew was already talking about computers for the children of Singapore, we were not yet there.

KATAYAMA: How about the preferences of [Ferdinand] Marcos, what kind of people did he trust most?

TATAD: He was not afraid of intelligent people. He was not afraid. He wanted to pick their brains.

KATAYAMA: How about the Ilocanos? Did he trust Ilocanos more than the rest?

TATAD: I am not Ilocano but yeah...

KATAYAMA: I heard from one of the generals that the reason he did not fully enjoy the trust of [President Ferdinand] Marcos was because he was not Ilocano.

TATAD: Well, it is possible to explain this. Ilocanos are the most clannish Filipinos to begin with. The first fruit pickers who migrated to America were Ilocanos and when you ask them if they are Filipinos, they would reply, "No we are Ilocanos." Okay. Now, one of the most preferred professions of the Ilocanos in the past, I do not know if it is still the same now, is soldiering. They developed a certain aristocracy there; you have to belong to the clique. If you run outside that, you probably need to work harder to be rated the same as the Ilocano generals.

KATAYAMA: You also mentioned about some abuses which happened during the martial law era. What kind of abuses were you referring to?

TATAD: All these abuses, these were not abuses directed by [Ferdinand] Marcos himself, because you know, after awhile, it became more difficult to control the organization. Each one was trying to get a slice of the pie for himself. Once authority becomes unaccountable, all these abuses come in.

KATAYAMA: Which year did all these abuses become obvious, based on your experience, 1975 or 1976?

TATAD: I suppose that up to 1975, we had the best years; after that we began to have more serious problems.

KATAYAMA: In your opinion, should Martial Law have been suspended earlier than 1978 when Marcos convened the Interim Batasang Pambansa (IBP)?

TATAD: Even earlier. I was proposing for him to call the elections in 1975.

TADEM: You proposed this to [President Ferdinand] Marcos?

KATAYAMA: But he did not like the idea?

TATAD: He said there was no need.

KATAYAMA: I am amazed because you are very courageous. I never heard any other Cabinet member proposing that kind of change in politics to Mr. Marcos.

TATAD: Because I was looking at the long term future of the Marcos presidency. You know, when I came in, his name was dirty as far as the media was concerned. One of the first things I proposed to him was I would not be using “Marcos” for official [purposes] but President of the Philippines for two weeks. It was part of the clean-up operations. I threw ideas and if he approved them okay, if not, it was also okay. I was not doing anything for myself but for my country.

KATAYAMA: You were never afraid that once he disliked you, you might have some problems with your security. Marcos might punish you in some way.

TATAD: It never occurred to me. I was doing my job. I was serving. For me, I did the things I could. I had no personal agenda. No ulterior motives. I was willing to lose my job anytime because I always believe that you have to earn public service everyday. At the end of the day, you can lose it, the next day you have to earn it again. You should not be less important than your office. If you derive your importance from your office, your office does not need you. You need your office, rather than the office needing you.

KATAYAMA: If I am not mistaken, you were the first among the cabinet members to quit.

TATAD: The only one.

TADEM: Years later, [Vicente] Paterno followed suit. I think he was also not happy in the DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways). He was moved from the Board of Investments (BOI) to DPWH (Department of Public Works and Highways). But I think, unlike you, he actively joined the demonstrations.

TATAD: He belongs to the pedigreed class. I have no pedigree. <laughs>

TADEM: Whom did you feel comfortable with?

TATAD: I did not feel any discomfort with anyone of them. I related with all of them on a professional level. Certainly, we did not belong to the same social class, but I never envied their pedigree. I never felt inferior because I did not have a pedigree. In fact, I felt superior because I came from a very small place which had nothing and I joined the Cabinet at 29.

TADEM: We also had an interview with Mr. [Manuel] Alba who also has a similar background.

TATAD: Ah yes.

TADEM: You were already out of the government then, when there was a clash between [Juan Ponce] Enrile and [Fabian] Ver. Would you know anything about that when you were still in the Cabinet?

TATAD: No.

TADEM: You did not have any relationship with [Juan Ponce] Enrile?

TATAD: [Juan Ponce] Enrile and I were two of the most visible cabinet members during Martial Law. We worked closely together in the community relations service of the government. We co-chaired many committees but again socially, we did not mix...

TADEM: I think it was just natural that PM [Prime Minister Cesar] Virata was close to Gerry [Gerardo] Sicat, to Ting [Vicente] Paterno... but not close to [Geronimo "Ronnie"] Velasco...

TATAD: Ronnie [Geronimo Velasco] was closer to Juan Ponce Enrile. They were business partners in Republic glass. Ronnie went to an Ivy League school.

TADEM: Yes. We got to know that when we interviewed him before he died.

TATAD: You got to interview him before he died?

TADEM: Yes, that was three years ago.

KATAYAMA: How about OD [Onofre D.] Corpuz, did you have any contact with him?

TATAD: OD Corpuz came in on the latter part [of the Marcos government] . I was already in the opposition when he became Secretary of Education. I had left the Cabinet, I think. I was in the Batasan already; we had some debates there in the Batasan, same with [Roberto “Bobby”] Ongpin. We had some debates, budgetary debates.

TADEM: With Blas Ople?

TATAD: Blas Ople, yes. We had good working relations because Blas and his... group were responsible for the speech writing for Marcos 1 [first term].

KATAYAMA: According to your biodata, you finished MA in Business Economics, which year was this?

TATAD: Very much later, 1982.

TADEM: When we were interviewing Placido Mapa, Jr., the Opus Dei seemed to have a very strong influence with regards to his policies, like for example, he did not agree with the World Bank on birth control etc. Did you feel that any of your personal convictions also found their way in the policies that you made?

TATAD: Did Cidito [Placido Mapa] say that? What exactly did he say?

TADEM: He was not in favor of the World Bank program for birth control...

TATAD: I think that is his personal conviction on the basis of his formation as a member of the Opus Dei, but the Opus Dei should not be distinguished from the Catholic Church, because the Catholic Church is against contraception. Now, I am a political progressive but I am a social conservative, I do not experiment with my moral convictions. The fundamentals of my existence as a human being remain stable and constant.

KATAYAMA: Reflecting from now, the Marcos era and the presidents that came after Marcos: Cory [Corazon Aquino], Ramos [Fidel V. Ramos], Estrada [Joseph “Erap” Estrada] and GMA [Gloria Macapagal Arroyo]...

TATAD: And now Noynoy [Benigno Aquino III] <laughs>

KATAYAMA: Which part of the Marcos politics was inherited by his successors, for instance, like [Fidel] Ramos and others? What was the impact of the Marcos politics in terms of the policies that were and are still being implemented?

TATAD: Political scientists tell us that there should be continuity in addressing the problems of the government... what happened however, with [Ferdinand] Marcos and his successors was there was a complete disjunction. There have been attempts to do away with even the best practices of the Marcos government, all for partisan and personal reasons. Everything that had a very strong imprimatur of Marcos had to go. The Energy Program, the Department of Energy, even the slogan that we had, “Isang Bansa, Isang Diwa” had to go because it was interpreted to divide the country, when in fact it was simply an expression of the nation striving for solidarity. We are one people, with one destiny. You can say that many of the programs, the subsequent administrations after Cory [Corazon Aquino] tried to implement... because Marcos tried to address the basic issues such as infrastructures, education, the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), etc. These were all in the Marcos agenda. Who has tried to perform as well as Marcos? I do not know how you would rate Cory [Corazon Aquino], there was very little to be seen. The money her government spent for almost six and half years was 1.3 trillion pesos, twice the amount [Ferdinand] Marcos spent in 20 years. [Fidel] Ramos tried to repair the damage through the Electric Crisis Act, which was sponsored in the Senate, but I think the IPPs (independent power producers) cost us a lot of money. The real costs are unexamined up to this point. Nothing happened during [Joseph Ejercito] Estrada’s time, with his interrupted administration. [Gloria Macapagal] Arroyo has put in a lot of infrastructures in the nine years she has been in office but at what cost? The leakage today through corruption is, how much, 60 percent? Because I understand in projects, 100 percent is lost. *Papel na lang ang natitira* (Only paper is left).

KATAYAMA: Do you think that strong leadership is necessary to make reforms in this country?

TATAD: A strong leader?

KATAYAMA: Or is it a hindrance in making reforms?

TATAD: It is a complex subject, you need a strong leader at all times, whether in times of peace or in times of difficulty but by strong leader I do not mean somebody who shoots better than the others. A strong leader to me has always been one who has a strong moral character and intellectual courage; one who sees beyond his nose; one who is able to say this is white when everyone says it is black; one who will risk losing everything to defend a just cause; one who is not afraid of costs. That, for me, is a strong leader.

TADEM: What about having an authoritarian form of government?

TATAD: Well, that is not a necessity but the problem right now is that all the institutions have been destroyed including the judiciary. We never had a judiciary like this. The stories about corruption in the highest levels are simply amazing. And the quality of men is so different from those who occupied the benches in the past. You know, we would always have to deal with corruption and inefficiency, but so long as the judiciary remained respectable we have hope. But you know, once the Constitution is destroyed because of jurisprudence how do you get out of it? It becomes the law. The absence of law becomes the law. [Consider]... the impeachment cases. You can no longer impeach anyone because if that someone suspects that he or she would be impeached, all he needs to do is to field someone to file an impeachment case against him that would not hold water. If the case is thrown out, the person is already safe. And you know how that happened? It was because of an impeachment case against Hilarion Davide Jr. when he was the head of the Supreme Court... Davide would have been impeached, so the Court came to his rescue. The court said there was already a previous complaint against him but it did not prosper... That is a complete destruction of the Constitution because the Constitution is very precise. All impeachment cases shall be initiated by the House of Representatives. A complaint will not be considered a case until the House of Representatives sends the articles of impeachment; [for Davide], there was no case,

only a complaint. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has used it and everyone else would use it from here on. Unfortunately, Davide has been named the centennial alumnus of the University of the Philippines. He is still with the UN (United Nations) without the benefit of confirmation of the Commission on Appointments; [that is] in violation of the law which says that no one may be appointed as an ambassador who is 70 years [old and] above...

[There] is one particular point that has [also] been destroyed... [the] executive privilege. The Supreme Court [nullified] the provision in the Constitution. The Constitution says that a Cabinet member only requires the permission of the President when he offers to appear before the Congress, not when he is summoned by the Congress. When summoned by the Congress, Congress is in control. *Nagpapaalam siya sa Presidente* [He asks the permission of the President], as a matter of course, not because he needs the consent of the President. No! And he may not withhold information from Congress under the guise of Executive privilege. The only thing he can do is to ask for an executive session. This question cannot be answered in public because of executive privileges. That is the meaning but the Supreme Court again...

TADEM: Can we come back...?

TATAD: We would have to arrange another sitting... We have not begun yet..

<Some chattering>

<End of interview>