

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY (0830H-INTEG)

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF *BIAK-NA-BATO*

**Speech of H.E. President Fidel V. Ramos
Centennial of the *Biak-na-Bato* Republic
San Miguel de Mayumo, Bulacan
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INTRODUCTION

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO TODAY, OUR EMBATTLED FOREFATHERS SOUGHT TO BRING TO A PEACEFUL END THE VIOLENCE AND STRIFE THAT HAD SWEEPED ACROSS THE LAND AS OUR NATION STRUGGLED TO BE BORN -- BRAVE HONORABLE MEN -- PATRIOTS ALL. GATHERED HERE IN THIS SACRED SPOT WERE SOME 52 REVOLUTIONARIES TO SEEK AN HONORABLE, JUST AND FAIR PEACE WITH SPAIN, THE COLONIAL MASTER.

ON THE SECOND DAY OF NOVEMBER 1897, THE FIRST PHASE OF OUR REVOLUTION CAME TO AN END. WE WERE ENGAGED IN A STRUGGLE FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF OUR PEOPLE AND FOR OUR RIGHT AS A NATION AND TO TAKE ITS RIGHTFUL PLACE AMONG THE FREE NATIONS OF THE WORLD.

THE MAKING OF A CONSTITUTION

ON THIS HISTORIC SITE OF *BIAK-NA-BATO*, WHERE OUR REVOLUTIONARY FORCES WERE ENCAMPED, OUR FOREFATHERS SET THEMSELVES THE TASK OF DRAFTING A CONSTITUTION THAT WOULD ENSHRINE THE VISION AND IDEALS BY WHICH THE FILIPINO NATION WOULD LIVE. THE ASSEMBLY, PRESIDED BY GENERAL AGUINALDO, DECLARED TO ABOLISH THE DEPARTMENTAL-REGIONAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT BY ADOPTING THE "*CONSTITUCION PROVISIONAL DE REPUBLICA DE FILIPINAS*" WHICH THE DELEGATES THEN SIGNED.

THE GOVERNMENT THAT WAS ESTABLISHED IN *BIAK-NA-BATO* WAS THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT IN "FILIPINAS". ALTHOUGH ITS CONSTITUTION WAS PROVISIONAL, ITS PREAMBLE STATED: "*THE SEPARATION OF FILIPINAS FROM THE SPANISH MONARCHY AND ITS ESTABLISHMENT AS AN INDEPENDENT AND SOVEREIGN STATE WITH THE NAME REPUBLICA DE FILIPINAS, WITH ITS OWN GOVERNMENT, IS THE GOAL SOUGHT BY THE REVOLUTION THAT BEGAN IN AUGUST 1896*".

THE DAY AFTER THE CONSTITUTION WAS SIGNED, THE ASSEMBLY MET AND ELECTED THE SUPREME COUNCIL. THOSE ELECTED WERE:

PRESIDENT	-	EMILIO AGUINALDO
VICE-PRESIDENT	-	MARIANO TRIAS
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR	-	ISABELO ARTACHO
SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS	-	ANTONIO MONTENEGRO
SECRETARY OF TREASURY	-	BALDOMERO AGUINALDO
SECRETARY OF WAR	-	EMILIANO RIEGO DE DIOS

MODERN CONSTITUTIONALISTS WILL EASILY DISCOVER FLAWS IN THE *BIAK-NA-BATO* CONSTITUTION. THE FLAWS WILL BE MOSTLY SEEN IN THE FORM OF OMISSIONS OR INCOMPLETENESS. MODERN FILIPINOS WANT THEIR CONSTITUTION TO COVER MOST EXIGENCIES AND DETAILS, MAINLY OUT OF A DISTRUST OF THEIR LEADERS, A DISTRUST OWNED TO MARTIAL LAW EXPERIENCE. ***THE REDEEMING VIRTUE OF THE BIAK-NA-BATO CONSTITUTION WAS THAT THE HANDFUL OF MEN WHO PROMULGATED IT TOOK CARE THAT IT WOULD BE PROVISIONAL OR TEMPORARY.***

THE CITIZENS HAVE THE FINAL SAY

THIS WAS THE DECISION OF MEN OVER WHOM THE PEOPLE HAD NO MEANS OF CONTROL OR DIRECT INFLUENCE, WHOSE AUTHORITY CAME FROM ABNORMAL AND EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS, BUT WHO FIXED THEIR AUTHORITY TO TWO YEARS, LEAVING IT TO THE REPRESENTATIVES TO INTERPRET THE PEOPLE'S VERDICT.

ON THE WHOLE, THE BIAK-NA-BATO SCHEME WAS AN APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP THAT MODERATED THE GOVERNMENT'S AUTHORITARIAN ORIGINS BY SELF-IMPOSED LIMITATIONS, CHARACTERIZED BY GRACE AND CONSCIENTIOUSNESS OF GENUINE PATRIOTISM.

IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS, IT WOULD BE WISE FOR US TO RE-EXAMINE OUR NATIONAL ASPIRATIONS IN RELATION TO OUR GOALS AS A NATION. JUST AS OUR FOREFATHERS DID ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, SO NOW TODAY, MUST WE CAREFULLY AND THOUGHTFULLY WEIGH THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR ACTIONS AND THEIR BENEFITS TO OUR PEOPLE.

IN THE PRACTICE OF GOVERNANCE AND THE DRAWING UP OF A CONSTITUTION, ***IT IS CLEAR THAT THE CITIZENS MUST HAVE THE FINAL SAY. THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE MUST NEVER BE CONFUSED WITH THE VOICE OF SELF-INTEREST OR THE VOICE OF PARTICULAR INTEREST GROUPS.*** IN A CONSTITUTION, WE DEAL WITH FUNDAMENTALS IN THE LIVES OF OUR PEOPLE AND OF OUR NATION.

WHETHER IT IS THE *BIAK-NA-BATO* CONSTITUTION, THE MALOLOS CONSTITUTION, THE 1935 CONSTITUTION, THE 1971 OR THE 1987 CONSTITUTIONS, OUR CONSTITUTION MUST BE ONE THAT REFLECTS TRULY THE ASPIRATIONS, IDEALS AND SENTIMENTS OF OUR PEOPLE.

A CONSTITUTION BY ITSELF IS NO MIRACLE CURE FOR THE PROBLEMS THAT CONFRONT OUR NATION. NO SINGLE DOCUMENT, NO MATTER HOW WELL DRAFTED, CAN SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS. THE LAWS EMANATING FROM OUR CONSTITUTION AND THE PROGRAMS IMPLEMENTING THE LAWS PROVIDE THE MORE PRECISE GUIDELINES AND ACTION PLANS THAT PROVIDE OUR CHART FOR A BETTER FUTURE.

BUT ONLY DEDICATED MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE THE PEOPLE'S WILL AND THE PEOPLE'S WELL-BEING GIVE LIFE TO ANY CONSTITUTION AND SOLVE THE PROBLEMS OF A NATION. MEN AND WOMEN ENDOWED WITH COMPETENCE AND INTEGRITY AND IMBUED WITH IDEALISM AND THE SPIRIT OF SELF-SACRIFICE, PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT, AND WHOSE LOVE OF COUNTRY SURPASSES ANY CONFLICTS WITH PERSONAL SELF-INTEREST.

THIS NOBLE OBJECTIVE OF THE BIAK-NA-BATO CONSTITUTION, GENERAL AGUINALDO AND HIS CO-WORKERS CONSTANTLY WORKED AT AND FOUGHT FOR. THIS IS THE TRUE SIGNIFICANCE OF BIAK-NA-BATO.

REMEMBERING BIAK-NA-BATO

THIS HISTORIC SITE REMAINS VERY MUCH AS IT WAS A HUNDRED YEARS AGO, PERHAPS NOT AS WELL RESPECTED AND REMEMBERED NATIONALLY, AS IT DESERVES TO BE. PERHAPS ONLY THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND SERIOUS HISTORIANS HAVE GIVEN *BIAK-NA-BATO* THE ATTENTION IT DESERVES.

BUT NOT ANYMORE. AS PART OF THE MAJOR EVENTS, UPON MY INSTRUCTIONS, THE NATIONAL CENTENNIAL COMMISSION HAS DESIGNATED *BIAK-NA-BATO* AS ONE OF THE SITES OF THE CENTENNIAL FREEDOM TRAIL. AS SUCH, IT WILL BE DEVELOPED INTO AN ECOLOGICAL NATURE PARK FOR ECO-TOURISM AND FOR HISTORICAL REMEMBRANCE.

THIS IS IN KEEPING WITH THE RAMOS ADMINISTRATION'S GOAL OF ENHANCING FILIPINO PRIDE IN THE FILIPINO, OF SUSTAINING DEVELOPMENT, AND OF SPREADING PROGRESS THROUGHOUT THE NATION. THE PRIME BENEFICIARIES OF THIS PROJECT SHALL BE THE RESIDENTS OF SAN MIGUEL DE MAYUMO AND ITS SURROUNDING AREAS.

ALREADY THE NATIONAL CENTENNIAL COMMISSION, THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM (DOT), THE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT OF SAN MIGUEL AND THE BULACAN PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAVE BEEN WORKING ON THIS PROJECT TO ENSURE THAT IT IS COMPLETED FOR NEXT YEAR'S CELEBRATION OF OUR CENTENNIAL AS A NATION.

I HAVE ALSO DIRECTED SEVERAL AGENCIES OF GOVERNMENT, WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES (DENR) IN THE LEAD, TO FACILITATE THE DRAFTING OF A PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION NOT LATER THAN DECEMBER 30, 1997, DECLARING THE LARGER *BIAK-NA-BATO* AREA AS A NATIONAL INTEGRATED PROTECTED AREA (NIPA), UNDER OUR NIPAs SYSTEM.

SHOWING OUR APPRECIATION

ON THIS SIGNIFICANT DATE IN OUR HISTORY, LET US TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY TO REFLECT UPON THE QUALITY AND CHARACTER OF OUR FOREBEARS AND THE SACRIFICES THEY WERE WILLING TO MAKE TO WIN OUR FREEDOM AS A PEOPLE. OUR REVOLUTIONARY GENERALS, WHO FOUGHT AGAINST SUPERIOR ODDS, CAN STAND PROUD WITH THE NATIONAL HEROES OF ANY OTHER PEOPLE.

IN OUR DAILY WORK LET US TRY TO CAPTURE A BIT OF THEIR ZEAL AND DEDICATION, AND ENDEAVOR TO CARRY ON WITH A SIMILAR MEASURE OF DEVOTION TO DUTY, HONOR AND COUNTRY.

THIS IS THE LEAST WE, THE FILIPINOS OF TODAY, CAN DO IN THE YEARS TO COME. LET US SHOW TO ALL THE STRENGTH OF OUR UNITY, SOLIDARITY AND TEAMWORK AS THOSE OF THE REVOLUTION DID 100 YEARS AGO.

I NOW SAY TO YOU -- LET'S GO! GO TEAM PHILIPPINES, GO!

MABUHAY ANG ALA-ALA NG BIAK-NA-BATO.

MABUHAY ANG PILIPINAS!

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