

SPEECH OF PRESIDENT FIDEL V. RAMOS
NATIONAL DEFENSE COLLEGES OF THE PHILIPPINES
AUGUST 21, 1992

President Go of the National Defense College of the Philippines, dalawang Presidente rito ngayon sa Malacanang, Mrs. Go, Secretary Renato de Villa of National Defense, Dean Marcos Eras the VP for Academic Affairs, Monsignor Zapatos Chief Chaplains, the members of the graduating class of Class 26, their spouses, children, if any grand children, parents, the members of the incoming class No. 27, other officials from the Armed Forces from the National Police and the other departments of government, co-workers in government, mga kasama, mga kaibigan at mga kababayan.

I consented to be your guest speaker on the graduation of the regular Class No. 27 and/or 26 when General Go pressed his invitation on me on one condition, I said tatanggapin ko iyan kung hindi ako gagamit noong toga. Because the toga issued to us as graduation of Class No. 3 back in 1969 is very different from what you have. It's about 20 kilos heavier especially the head gear. Secondly I said maybe you will consider having your graduation in the Ceremonial Hall in Malacanang because that is really the Palace of the People, we open it to everybody from now on. And certainly the graduates of NDCP the regular course being what it is deserved to have their graduation there, afterall I said we open it to practically all sectors now including the urban and the rural poor and so why not you.

But I must confess to you there is a very practical reason why I brought all of you here this afternoon. And that is because traffic is very heavy between here and Fort Bonifacio. Baka hindi ako makabalik for my next appointment which is still here at 4:30 in the afternoon during the rush period.

But this is indeed a very important occasion for all of us, for me as your President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief as well as a co-graduate of this very prestigious institution. And for you the members of Class No.26 who have worked long and hard to get to this point in your academic as well as your official careers.

This is also a meaningful occasion for Class 27 because I am sure that they would want to have their graduation here also which is a guaranteed that nobody in Class 27 will flank the course. Not because General Go will be very magnanimous to you. He has a very strict disciplinarian in the person of Dean Eras whom I have known for a long time, but because he will really work hard to make it back here one year from now.

I'm happy also that Dean Eras sort of reminisch about the history of the graduating class which came in on the 1st of July 1991 which was the month which I retired from government service when I resigned as your Secretary of National Defense to enter into a new and unknown field of endeavour. Just like you at that particular point you really did not know what the future held for you neither did I. Neither did Secretary Rene de Villa because at that particular point in time he was a free willing and care free and relax, retired four star General in the United States somewhere, but knowing what I have

to do in about two or three weeks I have to frantically search for him, burn the telephone wires and to also get his consent to make one last sacrifice for the good of the service and of the people and to consider becoming my successor in the Department of National Defense.

So you can visualize the 12-month, 13-month period that has passed and I guess this applies to all of us because here now, because of events, because of our aspirations and hardwork living to this long range goals we find ourselves together here in Malacanang on this particular date. Surely it is faith that has put us together. But maybe there is a useful purpose for all of this. We are now entering into a special period in our history. And it is a five or six-year period which will encompass our 100-year as a Republic on June 12, 1998, which will also bring us to this threshold of the 21st century. And during which time our people, the nation as a whole expects to be moved to competitiveness and modernization as our neighbors in Asia and the Pacific have already achieved or about to achieve.

Those of us who are here therefore are parts of a national team regardless of what is our role, whether we are new graduates, whether we are freshmen in the college that will graduate one year from now, whether we are the managers and the administrators of the College, whether we are alumni, whether we are members of the private sector there is a role that each of us must play or be prepared to play within the next five to six years.

Let me just try to spell out for you how critical this period is. It's our last chance to make good as a people and as a nation. And those that the ordinary Filipinos are counting upon are those that have been trained like you and I have. Those that have been stiffed in the principles, the concepts, the strategies of what we call the national interest. This is not merely defense or security as you and I know. It does include the welfare of our people, economic self-sufficiency, social justice and cultural identity as Filipinos.

Those of us who are in this hall today as graduates, students, professors, supervisors, alumni related to the NDCP are all aware that it is always the national interest and the welfare of the majority of our people, that is paramount to any other interest and to which all other sectoral, vested personal family interests must give way in the end.

To me our failures of the past and we have been independent for the last 46 years basically stem from the lack of appreciation as to what should be the highest interest of our people and of the nation. What is the paramount interest to which we must address our energies, our resources, our talents, our time even so that the people can prosper and the nation can maintain that respected and dignified position in the community of nations. But you who are through with the course in the NDCP I am sure know all of this by now. If however you feel that the thesis you wrote upon was not at that high level don't worry you can still continue learning about what is the national interest, what constitutes the public welfare to the majority of Filipinos. And I urge you the graduates to continue exploring and searching for the truth about what is good for the nation, what national objectives should we pursued, what are the strategies to bring this about, what directions must we take. For even the President having fix his vision on the national interest must also search for ways so that these objectives can be reached, so that the

nation can be led in that direction, so that at the end of his term maybe we shall already be approaching that distance shore where we want to be.

I therefore urge all of you as graduates not to stop studying at this point. Because sometimes we allow education to go to our heads instead of to our minds, we like the title that comes with being a graduate of the NDCP. Biro mo nga naman ay lieutenant colonel kayo kaagad hindi na dumaan sa 2nd lieutenant. Of course on the part of the military they have passed that point already. But at the same time they also get a very valuable masteral degree. All those in the civilian bureaucracy this is also equivalent to a CESO qualification and protects you as a civil servant in your tenure in your career in the government.

But to me and I am saying this as an old hand, as an old grad of the Class of 1969, regular Class No. 3. My stint at the NDCP even if our early beginnings in the college showed that the standards then were not what are there now in 1992. Often up many academic official, security and strategic horizons for me. So if there is any one message I would like to leave with you today it is that, that because you are more aware of what is good for the nation, what we need to do for our people that you will continue to search and seek answers and solutions to the problems that beset us today.

For those in Class 27 I also urge you to spend as much time in the NDCP as possible even if you are not suppose to be there, be there doing the search, promoting good personal relations with the professors especially those that might be in your thesis panel and just look around because getting mixed up with the bonds of military professionals and career public officials and also leaders from the private sector is an education by itself.

I would like to close by giving you a glimpse of how we are operating during these first 100 days of the Ramos administration. You must have gleam by now that what we trying to do in order to address five major programs of government upon which we are focusing during these first 100 days. Meaning, putting in a better condition of stability, accelerating economic recovery, fast tracking the power development program, streamlining the bureaucracy and protecting the environment that what we are doing is to put in solid foundations so that these five major programs can really take off and become successful in the period beyond the first 100 days.

I am gladden by the fact that there are many quarters that are now seeing it in this light because we must be sure that the foundations are solid before we can really make sure of the success of our future actions. And a very important element of all of this is that our leadership itself must have a solid and common basis for interaction which is unified by a consensus on what is the national interest, what are the national objectives, what is the national strategy, what are the major programs and projects that must be undertaken to accomplish all of this. This is the methodology they teach us in the NDCP. What I'm trying to do merely is to expand the NDCP from its confines there in Fort Bonifacio into the real world of political leadership. That is why I am reaching out to the members of the House of Representatives. I'm reaching out to the members of the Senate and even to the leadership that represents the opposition, even to those that I faced as opponents in the Presidential race. I'm asking all these leaders to be together with me in the recognition of what is the national

interest. And that is in simple terms the security, the stability and the peaceful condition of the Republic of the Philippines and the welfare of all Filipinos but especially the law-abiding component of our people who are the majority. How to go about this? Well, there are many ways. But if we are all together on our understanding of what is the national interest then I think the supporting strategies, programs, projects will fall into place without too much difficulty. On the other hand if we do not recognize what are those national goals that have eluded us all these years, 46 years of independence, we will never even be able to make a simple project even if it's only road construction successful. I deplore the fact that I still see even now with only six years to go until the 100-year of Philippine Independence. So much wrangling about projects here, projects there because there is credit involved. I say that let's get together to make a project big or small successful and there will be enough credit to share for everybody. On the other hand, if that project does not succeed then the fault finding and the blame is not easily shared, it is passed around from one person to another.

If we examine how other countries around us have succeeded. To me it's because of two things. Number one, they agreed on their national goals right away. And regardless of party affiliation the leadership move towards those goals. Secondly, they really empower their people, recognizing that the Filipino family, the Filipino households are our basic economic units, they made them more efficient, they made them more capable, they made them more self-reliant by developing their talents, providing them opportunities for entrepreneurship and production, easier credit, post harvest facilities, marketing assistance even export marketing assistance. This is what we are also trying to do in this administration. Bigyan ng sariling kapangyarihan ang mga pangkaraniwang Pilipino.

But beyond the economic side we also want them to have a bigger voice in decision making governing their own futures and their own welfare. That is why the politics of patronage will not work, it has not work in private for the last 46 years and even more than that during the Commonwealth period.

So now I close by reminding you that you are now part of this team that will participate in a new kind of governments in which the people are given a bigger voice in which the national leaderships are being persuaded to recognize and to agree to a common set of national goals and to encourage the career public servants like all of you and the leaders of the private sector to help in the solution and the answers to the problems that beset us today.

With all of this in mind ladies and gentlemen let me thank you again for coming here. Let me congratulate you oncemore, let me assure you that you have a friend and helping hand in Malacanang, those of you who are graduating today and let me assure Class 27 that you can have a similar ceremony in Malacanang, maybe not here, there are many rooms here. And maybe by the time General Go and Secretary de Villa and I are finished also with our respective tours of duty, we shall have conducted graduation ceremonies for the NDCP in any big room in Malacanang Palace.

Thank you very much, good day and good luck to all of us.

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