

VALOR, HONOR AND DUTY TO COUNTRY
IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGES

Speech of H. E. President Fidel V. Ramos
Araw ng mga Bayani
Corregidor, August 30, 1992

Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

There is no place more fitting than Corregidor to remember the heroism of our countrymen who sacrificed their very lives in the name of freedom.

If courage were the measure of a man, then our heroes stand head above the rest. History has vindicated the enormous sacrifices they have made --- in a nation where the ideals of democracy reign supreme.

The Legacy of Corregidor

Corregidor, the rock, is steeped in great military traditions and heroism. During the bleakest moments of World War II, Corregidor stood as a beacon of hope, our country's final fortress before it bowed down to the military supremacy of Japan. In the words of General Douglas Mc Arthur, "Corregidor became a universal symbol of resistance against the Japanese."

The illustrious history of Corregidor is a study in determination and the burning spirit of nationalism of the Filipino. It is the quintessence of valor and duty to country.

Today, we remember the valiant Filipino soldier who died in the line of duty. We remember those who have fought for the ideals of justice and democracy --- and have paid the price with their lives.

We pay tribute to their courage, which saw us through our darkest hours, and during those times when hope was at its lowest.

Because of them, the cause of freedom is strengthened. Because of them, democracy lives. This is the legacy of Corregidor to the Filipino and to the world.

Courage and Heroism against Poverty

We see these images of bravery and heroism repeated not only during times of war, but also during these times of peace. For heroism and duty to country are not solely the birthright of the soldier, but of every Filipino who values freedom and democracy.

We saw these same images during the 1986 EDSA revolution, when both soldier and civilian joined forces against the tyranny of a dictatorship. We see them today as we valiantly fight the crippling effects of poverty and deprivation.

Our heroes have many faces. Their uniforms vary. They come from all walks of life, with a common vision - the empowerment of our people so that they may enjoy a life free from poverty and social injustice.

The guns of Corregidor are now silent. Yet the nation is still waging a battle, not against a superior military force, but against a social malaise whose effects are as destructive as war itself. We are still waging a war : against poverty.

We boast of a nation of 64 Million heroes. Let me then hear from you -- our heroes. Let us be courageous in these time of trials, testing the limits of our endurance and our resourcefulness. Let us as one people take up the cause of liberty, no longer for our sovereignty, but liberty from economic strife, inhumanity, divisiveness, and moral degradation.

The courage of life is more often less dramatic than the courage during times of war. But it is no less magnificent, nor is its essence less noble.

Conclusion

As we celebrate "Araw ng mga Bayani" we pay homage to the courage and heroism of our fallen soldiers. But we should not forget those acts of courage with which we Filipinos have lived.

Join me, Philippines, as we courageously claim our rights to a destiny that is borne out of the many lives that were given up for our sake.

This is what our heroes died for. This is what is expected of us. Its fulfillment is their triumph.

Finally, let me acknowledge the Department of Tourism, in particular, the Corregidor Foundation for the hard work that they have contributed to preserve and protect this wartime relic from our heroic past.

I am encouraging the Corregidor Foundation to step up its campaign in bringing in more tourists and visitors both domestic and foreign to this great island. If you will look around you, Corregidor offers not only memories that are vividly brought back to life by the relics of the last world war; but along with its historical value, Corregidor has the potential of becoming a substantial income earner for the country.

To my countrymen I leave you this: Peace and democracy do not live in charters and covenants alone. They rest in the heart of every Filipino. Only that some hearts need to be awakened, so that peace and democracy are harnessed for the common good.

No treaty or pact, no government program, however great, could ever hope to achieve its purpose of prosperity with dignity without the support and commitment of all people.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay ang sambayanang Pilipino.

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