

**Speech of H. E. President Fidel V. Ramos
Club 365 20th Anniversary
Hotel Intercon
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INTRODUCTION

THIS COFFEE-SHOP PARLIAMENT -- WHERE OFFICIALS ARE ROASTED TOGETHER WITH THE BEANS, AND EVERY DAY IS OPEN SEASON ON POLITICIANS -- IS, IN THE WORDS OF EMIL JURADO -- WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE CREATION 20 YEARS AGO -- A UNIQUE CLUB. AND IT CERTAINLY WAS, AS A SANCTUARY FOR FREE OPINION UNDER THE MARTIAL LAW REGIME.

BUT THE INSTITUTION OF THE POLITICAL CLUB ITSELF HAS A LONG AND RESPECTABLE HISTORY.

IT DATES BACK AT LEAST TO THE GREEK AGORA -- WHICH, AS YOU KNOW, WAS BOTH A MARKETPLACE AND THE SITE OF THE POPULAR ASSEMBLY THAT GOVERNED THE ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY.

THE FRENCH REVOLUTION WAS FOMENTED BY POLITICAL CLUBS LIKE THE RADICAL JACOBINS, WHICH TOOK THEIR NAME FROM AN OLD DOMINICAN CONVENT WHERE THEY MET, NEXT TO THE CHURCH OF ST. JACQUES IN PARIS.

IN OUR COUNTRY, THE BEST KNOWN PREDECESSOR OF CLUB 365 WAS THE ESCOLTA WALKING CORPORATION -- WHICH CONVENED AT VARIOUS TIMES IN VARIOUS CAFES ON THE ESCOLTA -- COFFEE SHOPS THAT EVENTUALLY CLOSED ONE AFTER THE OTHER.

UNDER MARTIAL LAW, CLUB 365 KEPT ALIVE THE SPARK OF IRREVERENCE AMID A DEADENING REGIME OF CONFORMITY.

IT THUMBED ITS COLLECTIVE NOSE AT THE POMPOUS AND THE POWERFUL.

IN MANY OF US IN THE ARMED FORCES AND THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT AT THAT TIME THE CONVICTION GREW THAT ENOUGH WAS ENOUGH -- A CONVICTION FOR WHICH WE STAKED OUR LIVES IN THE INITIAL MUTINY THAT, BY GOD'S GRACE, BECAME TRANSFORMED INTO OUR PEOPLE POWER REVOLUTION OF FEBRUARY 1986.

MY FAITH IN FREEDOM

THE PATRON-SAINT OF THIS CLUB, KA DOROY VALENCIA -- REMINISCING ABOUT THE ESCOLTA WALKING CORPORATION -- RECALLED THAT PRESIDENTS USED TO SEND SPIES TO LISTEN TO WHAT THE COFFEE-DRINKERS WERE SAYING.

THAT -- YOU CAN BE SURE -- WILL NEVER HAPPEN UNDER THIS PRESIDENCY.

I WILL NOT BOTHER TO SEND JOE ALMONTE OR RAFFY ALUNAN TO CHECK OUT RUMORS; BUT, I MYSELF WILL COME TO CLUB 365 WHENEVER I NEED TO KEEP IN TOUCH.

AND I PROMISE TO PICK UP MY SHARE OF THE BILL, OR EVEN THE WHOLE BILL.

I WILL NOT BORE YOU WITH PROTESTATIONS OF MY DEVOTION TO FREEDOM AND CONSTITUTIONALITY.

I WILL SAY ONLY THAT -- SPEAKING OBJECTIVELY -- THE TIME FOR AUTHORITARIANISM HAS PASSED IN OUR COUNTRY AND IN THE WORLD.

ANY WOULD-BE STRONGMAN WOULD BE FOOLISH TO TRY PUSHING THE FILIPINO PEOPLE AROUND EVER AGAIN.

WE HAVE SEEN IT TAKE PLACE OVER AND OVER AGAIN IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE WORLD IN RECENT TIMES: ONCE A CRITICAL MASS OF POPULAR OPINION HAS FORMED AGAINST AUTHORITARIANISM, TYRANNY BECOMES IMPOSSIBLE.

IN THE END, THERE IS NEVER ANY SUBSTITUTE FOR FREEDOM.

WHAT I AM TRYING TO DO

SINCE 1986, WE HAVE BEEN TRYING TO UNDO THE ILL-EFFECTS OF AUTHORITARIAN RULE. MY DISTINGUISHED PREDECESSOR, CORY AQUINO, RESTORED OUR CIVIL LIBERTIES -- AND THEN DEFENDED THEM TENACIOUSLY AGAINST REPEATED ASSAULTS FROM REBELS AND INSURGENTS.

MY WORK NOW -- AS I SEE IT -- IS TO BROADEN OUR DEMOCRACY BY USING IT TO ENABLE THE LEAST OF OUR PEOPLE TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES AND TO UPLIFT THE POOREST AMONG OUR COUNTRYMEN.

OVER THE PAST 85 DAYS, I HAVE PRIMARILY CONCERNED MYSELF WITH SETTING THE COURSE OF MY ADMINISTRATION, LAYING THE BASIS FOR EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT AND PROVIDING ACTIVE LEADERSHIP IN ADDRESSING NATIONAL CONCERNS.

IN THIS, I HAVE BEGUN AT THE BEGINNING -- WITH OBLIGATORY TASKS LIKE RESTORING POLITICAL STABILITY, WHICH DETERIORATED DISASTROUSLY UNDER AUTHORITARIAN RULE.

WE HAVE ALSO BEGUN FREEING THE ECONOMY -- TO DISMANTLE CRONY CAPITALISM, AND TO TAKE THE INITIAL STEPS TO INSURE THAT ECONOMIC GROWTH ALSO BENEFITS THE MAJORITY AMONG US WHO ARE POOR.

THE REACTION TO OUR INITIAL INITIATIVES OF THE GROUPS FOR WHOM THEY ARE MEANT GIVES US GROUND FOR OPTIMISM -- AN OPTIMISM THAT THE NUMBERS AND QUALITY OF INCOMING FOREIGN INVESTORS HAVE BEGUN TO REFLECT.

THE ANTI-CRIME COMMISSION HEADED BY THE VICE-PRESIDENT -- HAVING LANDED ITS FIRST MIDDLE-SIZED FISH -- IS REDOUBLING ITS EFFORTS TO BRING UP SOME REALLY BIG ONES.

OUR OFFER OF AN AMNESTY AND PEACE PACKAGE HAS RECOVERED FOR GOVERNMENT THE MORAL HIGH GROUND THE STRONGMAN REGIME LOST IN ITS STRUGGLE AGAINST EAST ASIA'S LAST RADICAL INSURGENCY AND SECESSION.

LET NO ONE MISTAKE MY DETERMINATION TO ACHIEVE LASTING PEACE AND A JUST AND LAWFUL SOCIETY FOR OUR PEOPLE. LET NO ONE DOUBT MY RESOLVE TO DEAL WITH THE ROOT CAUSES OF REBELLION IN OUR COUNTRY.

ECONOMIC REFORMS

IN THE ECONOMY, THE BASIC REFORM IS TO CORRECT STRUCTURAL DEFECTS WHICH DATE BACK TO THE COLONIAL PERIOD -- DEFECTS AGGRAVATED BY THE DICTATORSHIP, PATRONAGE POLITICS, AND CRONY CAPITALISM.

AMONG EAST ASIA'S TIGER-ECONOMIES, MANUFACTURING HAS TYPICALLY BECOME THE LEADING SECTOR -- GENERATING THE LARGEST PROPORTION OF JOBS AND PRODUCING THE BIGGEST SHARE OF GDP.

IN OUR COUNTRY, MANUFACTURING STILL EMPLOYS ONLY ONE IN TEN FILIPINO WORKERS -- PROPORTIONATELY FEWER, IN FACT, THAT IT DID IN THE 1960S.

THE GREAT BULK OF OUR JOB SEEKERS MUST STILL FIND WHAT UNFULFILLING WORK THEY CAN IN OUR BACKWARD AGRICULTURE OR IN MARGINAL CITY OCCUPATIONS LIKE WATCHING CARS OR VENDING ON SIDEWALKS.

OUR FACTORIES -- WHICH ARE TYPICALLY CAPITAL-INTENSIVE, FATTEN UNHEALTHILY ON MONOPOLY PROFITS IN THE HIGHLY-PROTECTED HOME MARKET, BUT ARE TOO INEFFICIENT TO COMPETE IN THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

AND THIS INEFFICIENCY IS BUILT INTO THE SYSTEM. BECAUSE OF MASS-POVERTY, OUR EFFECTIVE HOME MARKET IS SO SMALL -- DESPITE OUR LARGE POPULATION -- THAT THERE IS HARDLY ANY INDUSTRY WHICH REACHES A SUFFICIENT SCALE.

THE OBVIOUS SOLUTION IS TO SPECIALIZE FOR EXPORT -- AND NOT JUST IN INDUSTRIES LIKE GARMENTS OR SEMI-CONDUCTORS, WHICH DEPEND SO HEAVILY ON IMPORTED INPUTS.

IF WE WANT TO DEVELOP ECONOMIC MUSCLE, WE MUST SPECIALIZE IN AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL COMMODITIES IN WHICH BOTH OUR RESOURCES AND OUR WORKPEOPLE HAVE COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE.

OPENING THE ECONOMY TO GLOBAL COMPETITION WILL OBVIOUSLY BE DIFFICULT IN THE SHORT TERM. BUT -- AS YOU AND I KNOW -- IN THIS WORLD THERE IS NO FREE LUNCH: NO GAIN WITHOUT ANY PAIN.

SETTING A COMPETITIVE EXCHANGE RATE MAY RISK SOME UNDESIRE TEMPORARY EFFECTS. INEFFICIENT INDUSTRIES COULD BE DRIVEN TO THE WALL. BUT THOSE THAT SURVIVE SHOULD THEN BE LEAN, MEAN AND EFFICIENT -- AND NO LONGER THE FAT, SELF-SATISFIED, RETARDED, MIDDLE-AGED "INFANTS" THAT THEY ARE NOW.

WHAT IS MORE, WE HAVE NO ROOM FOR HALFWAY MEASURES. OUR ECONOMIC REFORM PACKAGE MUST PERMANENTLY SHIFT THE WEIGHT OF GOVERNMENT INCENTIVES FROM IMPORT-SUBSTITUTION TO EXPORTING.

UNLESS WE CHANGE ITS BASIC STRUCTURE, OUR ECONOMY WILL NEVER ATTAIN SELF-SUSTAINING GROWTH.

AND UNLESS WE AS A NATION CAN STAND ON OUR OWN, WE WON'T EVEN QUALIFY FOR THE RACE FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT OUR NEIGHBORS IN ASEAN ARE ALREADY RUNNING.

STRUCTURAL CHANGE, THEN, IS THE GREATEST CHALLENGE WE FACE.

THAT CHALLENGE I SHALL NOT AVOID.

RESPONSE TO YOUR CIVIC CONSCIENCE

IN OUR COUNTRY THE PRESIDENT HAS UNIQUE POWERS TO MOVE THE NATION FORWARD, DEPENDING ON HIS VIGOR AND HIS VISION. THESE PRESIDENTIAL POWERS TO EXHORT, TO MOTIVATE, TO CAJOLE, TO FAST TRACK, TO DISCIPLINE, I AM DETERMINED TO USE -- TO CARRY OUR COUNTRY ACROSS THIS THRESHOLD OF PAIN TOWARD A NEW ECONOMIC FUTURE.

BUT I NEED YOUR HELP -- AND THE HELP OF EVERY CITIZEN WHO FEELS -- AS WE ALL DO -- THAT IT IS TIME THIS COUNTRY GOT MOVING.

THE PHILIPPINE STATE HAS HISTORICALLY REQUIRED EXTRAORDINARILY LITTLE OF ITS CITIZENS. AND, AS INDIVIDUALS, WE FILIPINOS ACKNOWLEDGE FEW OBLIGATIONS TO THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY.

BUT THIS MUTUAL INDIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATE AND CITIZEN CANNOT GO ON.

WE MUST -- EACH OF US -- RESPOND TO HIS CIVIC CONSCIENCE.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE PRICE OF FREEDOM.

SIX YEARS AGO, WE WON BACK OUR DEMOCRACY -- AFTER ENDURING ONE-MAN RULE MORE THAN FOR 13 YEARS. NOW WE MUST LIVE UP TO IT.

DEMOCRACY ALWAYS ASKS MORE OF THOSE WOULD FOLLOW IT THAN OTHER FORMS OF GOVERNMENT.

UNDER MARTIAL LAW, YOU AND I HAD NO SAFE OPTION EXCEPT TO FOLLOW.

BUT IN A DEMOCRACY, PEOPLE MUST CHOOSE TO PLACE THE NATIONAL INTEREST ABOVE THEIR OWN. THEY MUST ABIDE VOLUNTARILY BY ACCEPTED RULES OF CONDUCT. THEY MUST -- ON THEIR OWN -- ABIDE BY A TRADITION OF CIVILITY.

TODAY WE FILIPINOS MUST LEARN TO ACCEPT THAT NATIONAL SOCIETY IS MORE -- MUCH MORE -- THAN JUST AN AGGREGATION OF INDIVIDUALS OR FAMILIES OR CLANS.

WE MUST REALIZE THAT EVERY HUMAN SOCIETY IS A PARTNERSHIP OF CONNECTED GENERATIONS WHICH INCLUDES NOT ONLY THOSE WHO ARE LIVING BUT THOSE WHO ARE DEAD AND THOSE YET TO BE BORN.

AND WE CANNOT CONTINUE -- AS PEOPLE HAD DONE IN THE PAST -- TO PASS THE BUCK TO SOME FUTURE GENERATION.

HINDI NA NATIN MAAARING SABIHIN PA: "SAKA NA ANG PAG-IIMPOK; SAKA NA ANG PANGANGALAGA; SAKA NA ANG PAG-AYOS; SAKA NA ANG SIPAG, SAKA NA ANG DISIPLINA."

WE FILIPINOS HAVE BEEN SO SELF-INDULGENT FOR SO LONG THAT WE HAVE WASTED MOST OF THE ASSETS -- THE ECONOMIC RESOURCES, THE CULTURAL STRENGTHS, THE TECHNOLOGICAL SKILLS -- WE ONCE ENJOYED IN THE CONTEST FOR DEVELOPMENT WITH OUR NEIGHBORS IN EAST ASIA.

NOW WE ARE DERIDED AS THE "SICK MAN" OF OUR REGION.

NOW WE ARE THE EXCEPTION TO THE EAST ASIAN RULE OF ECONOMIC VIGOR AND POLITICAL STABILITY.

SO FAR DOWN FROM SO WAY UP: SO MANY THINGS TO DO, AND SO LITTLE TIME. MUST WE WAIT ANOTHER 20 YEARS FOR THINGS TO HAPPEN?

NOT REALLY, FOR WE HAVE ALREADY BEGUN.

THANK YOU AND GOOD EVENING.

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