

The Policies and Achievements of the Government and Regeneration of the Filipino

(Excerpt)

by Manuel L. Quezon

National strength can only be built on character. A nation is nothing more nor less than its citizenry. It is the people that make up the nation and, therefore, it cannot be stronger than its component parts. Their weakness is its failings, their strength its power. Show me a people composed of vigorous, sturdy individuals, of men and women healthy in mind and body; courteous, brave, industrious, self-reliant; purposeful in thought as well as in action; imbued with sound patriotism and a profound sense of righteousness; with high social ideals and a strong moral fiber; and I will show you a great nation, a nation that will not be submerged, a nation that will emerge victorious from the trials and bitter strifes of a distracted world, a nation that will live forever, sharing the common task of advancing the welfare and promoting the happiness of mankind.

We are engaged in the epic task of building our nation, to live and flourish, not for a day but for all time. We must find the flaws, if there be any, in our concept of individual and community life, as well as in our character, and proceed at once to remedy them.

I have an abiding faith in our people. I know that they have all the faculties needed to become a powerful and enlightened nation. The Filipino is not inferior to any man of any race. His physical, intellectual, and moral qualities are as excellent as those of the proudest stock of mankind. But some of these qualities, I am constrained to admit, have become dormant in recent years. If we compare our individual and civic traits with those that adorned our forefathers, we will find, I fear, that we, the Filipinos of today, have lost much of the moral strength and power for the growth of our ancestors. They were strong-willed, earnest, adventurous people. They had traditions potent in influence in their lives, individually and collectively. They had the courage to be pioneers, to brave the seas, clear the forest and erect towns and cities upon the wilderness. They led a life of toil and communal service. Each one considered himself an active part of the body politic. But those traditions are either lost or forgotten. They exist only as a hazy-mist in our distant past. We must revive them, for we need the anchorage of these traditions to guide and sustain us in the proper discharge of our political and social obligations.

The Filipino of today is soft, easy-going. His tendency is towards parasitism. He is uninclined to the sustained strenuous effort! He lacks earnestness. Face-saving is the dominant note in the confused symphony of his existence. His sense of righteousness is often dulled by the desire for personal gain. His norm of conduct is generally prompted by expediency rather than by principle. He shows a failing in that superb courage which impels action because it is right, even at the cost of self-sacrifice. His greatest fear is not to do wrong, but of being caught doing wrong. He is frivolous in his view of life. His conception of virtue is many times conventional. He takes his religion lightly. He thinks that lip-service and profession are equivalent to deep and abiding faith. He is inconstant; he lacks perseverance; the first obstacles baffle him, and he easily admits defeat. The patriotism of many Filipinos of today is skin-deep, incapable of inspiring heroic deeds. There are those who are apt to compromise with ethical principles and to regard truth as not incompatible with misrepresentation or self-deceit.

This appraisal of the character of our people today may sound too severe. You will realize that I would be happier if I could only shower praise upon my countrymen. But my responsibility as head of this Nation compels me to face and state facts, however disagreeable they may be to me or to our people, for it is only thus that we can remedy existing evils that threaten to destroy the vitality and vigor of the race. Because I have not lost faith that there is, within us, all the spiritual and moral forces needed for the building of a great nation, I am ruthless in pointing out our present shortcomings. Our task—it is a heroic task—is to awaken and apply these faculties so that our people should become what of right they should be: morally strong, virile, hard-working, refined, enterprising, persevering, public-spirited.

I want our people to grow and be like the molave, strong and resilient, rising on the hillside, unafraid of the raging flood, the lightning or the storm, confident of its own strength. If we have the will to survive and the will to achieve social efficiency, we cannot delay this task of spiritual regeneration. Let us begin to mold the typical Filipino.

To insure the accomplishment of this task of national spiritual reconstruction, we shall formulate and adopt a social code—a code of ethics and personal conduct—that can be explained in the schools, preached from the pulpits, and taught in the streets and plazas, and in the remotest corners of our land. We shall indoctrinate every man, woman, and child in its precepts. By every means and power at my command, I shall strive to enforce its principles and to require that they be so universally and constantly observed, that our children may breathe it in the air and feel it in their very flesh. Every Filipino is a part and an objective of this great national movement, the success of which depends upon his own success in building up his character and developing his faculties.

This undertaking—the regeneration of the Filipino—constitutes the paramount interest of my administration. My most cherished ambition is to see it realized. It is the greatest prize that I can crave for my life. I call upon all the teachers, the ministers of every faith, the political and social leaders, and particularly upon you, young men and young Women, to be at the vanguard of this crusade.

We have attained our freedom, but our spirit is still bound by the shackles forged from the frailties of our nature. we owe it to ourselves and our posterity to strike them down.

Other peoples of the world are straining themselves to attain higher levels of progress and national security. We shall not lag behind. the sun!

The Filipino people are on the march, towards their destiny, to conquer their place in the sun.